The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN ▪ A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE ▪VOLUME 12.30

I let my anger take over my soul and didn't think about my actions, and now I'm facing the repercussions for foolishness. I let the bullshhh infest my mind and the hate eat at my heart. I answered the devil's call knowing he'd let me fall. And even though something told me not to inside, I still had to ride.

read the rest of Lonely's POW on page 13

Welcome to issue 12.30. This week it is with great honor to hand the editorial; note responsibility to our dear friend and colleague Michael Kroll. Now, before we pass the keyboard over to Michael, allow us to inform you that not all the 12.30 edits were complete, so be on the look out for your writings if you can't find them in this issue in issue 12.31. Also, we will not be conducting workshops next week, so see you in a couple weeks! OK, Michael!

While it's hard to believe this will ever happen to us when we are young and vigorous, if we live long enough, there comes a time when the body and the mind begin to slow down. As the oldest member of the core Beat team, I have been considering just when it would be appropriate to bow out and leave the stage to those with more energy, those who understand a world that has grown much more violent and unpredictable than in my youth, and those who find today's electronic revolution second-nature (instead of viewing technology as a beast to keep at arm's length...)

And so, having crossed the chronological threshold that gives me access to Social Security, and with a real plan for the next phase of my life, I have made the decision to leave The Beat and to enter the strange territory known as "retirement." This may sound like a dream, and in many ways it is. But there is also an element of nightmare in contemplating a future without clear definitions and expectations and — more frightening still — without a reliable income. (The Social Security to which I'm entitled after nearly fifty years in the workforce is less than one-third of my current salary...)

All this is simply an introduction into something which started me thinking about how each of us handles those moments of panic when we look ahead and fear what we cannot see and what we cannot know that awaits us around the corner. It made me ponder a question that only you wonderful writers of The Beat can answer for me: What is it like to have a panic attack from inside the cages in which you live?

I had just such a panic attack this past weekend, and that is what tripped me into this wonder about panic behind bars. What happened in my case is this: I made a "firm" decision that I would retire from active, daily participation in The Beat Within, give up my salary (though continue on a limited, hourly basis). Let me say quickly that this was not an easy decision.

I have done many things in my life that I can take pride in: I went to a fine university back in the 1960s and earned a degree — but also stood together with my fellow students to fight back against abuses of our free speech rights, and went to jail to protest those abuses; I taught high school in faraway Borneo (Malaysia); I directed a national organization to end the massive overuse of prisons in this country back in the 1970s (National Moratorium on Prison Construction); I took part in numerous political demonstrations to protest America's foreign wars and domestic wars against the poor and minorities (and was arrested for these efforts perhaps a dozen times); I established myself as a writer on the subject of the justice system, and particularly of this country's overuse of prisons and reliance on the death penalty; I was the first director of a national organization called the Death Penalty Information Center, still going strong in Washington, D.C.; I have worked as an investigator on behalf of men facing the death penalty or already condemned to the ultimate punishment. In short, in my more than 60 years on this mud ball called Earth, I have done many things that I believe are worthy.

But none of these things has made me as proud as my association with The Beat Within and all of you writers who have taught me so much, and who continue to teach me so much. So, choosing to walk away from the day-to-day was not an easy choice to make. And yet, there comes a time... and I decided the time is now.

Once the decision was made, I saw no reason to delay, so I set the date for the last pay period of this month. And, for about a minute, I was happy with that decision. But then, second-thoughts began to worm their way into my brain. I began to wonder if I had made the right decision, if the date I chose was coming too soon, if... if... if... Finally, my worries spurred me into a full-blown panic attack! I went to bed on Saturday night at about 11, but suddenly awoke two hours later. All those "ifs" began to play on my mind, and no matter how hard I tried to return to sleep it was impossible. I tossed and turned. I got up and went to the kitchen to get a drink of water. I tried again to sleep, but it would not come. I got up again, and went outside to walk around, to think, to tire myself out. I turned on the TV and tried to fall asleep to an old movie that was playing in the middle of the night. I went to the computer and played some games. I listened to music that I love. I paced, talked to myself, tried to read, tried to write, tried to calm myself by banishing the thoughts that were keeping me awake.

And then I began to think about you, and my "ifs" became "what ifs." What if I were locked up? How would I handle this momentary panic? What would I do to calm myself if I couldn't walk outside, if I couldn't turn on the TV, if I couldn't listen to music? What if I had to pace in a tight little circle? What if none of those things which define comfort for us (our own rooms, our own food, music, pets, those we love) were available to me? How would I handle it? Even in the best of times and the best of moods, it is hard to imagine giving up so much. But what about when it is not the best of times and you're not in the best of moods? How would it be to stress, as I was stressing, without any available outlet for that stress?

To be honest, I don't know how I would handle it, but it gave me a new appreciation for what so many of you go through. I began to feel what you might go through as your court date looms large, or as you get news of an illness in your family that you cannot do anything about. How would I handle that feeling that you must have felt when the walls begin to press in on you, and you get that that powerful desire to walk out without any ability to do it? What strength it must take to keep yourself in check at those times when the fear rises up and panic can so easily sweep you away! What do you do at times like that? What can you teach others who may experience this same panic? What can you teach me?

I have come away from this experience with yet another confirmation of just how strong all of you are, just how much you have had to learn in order to live and to survive even in freedom. And then — having been taken from all that is familiar — what powers of the mind and the soul it must take for you to adjust to an environment that is designed for maximum stress. Each of you has a resilience and strength born of this hardship that makes my own reasons for panic seem puny and unworthy. And it makes me wonder: Do you know your own strength? Do you truly know what you are capable of achieving? Having endured so much, do you know what you could do if you put that strength to use in entirely different ways?

Like I said, these are questions that only you Beat writers can attempt to answer. My panic has passed, and I will move on with what is left of my life. (I calmed myself by postponing my departure; I will not be officially leaving The Beat until the end of September.) I will be fine.

But what about you? Will you be fine? How many of you will be able to translate the power you clearly have — even when you don't know you have it — and turn it to your advantage? And by that, I do not mean continuing in a lifestyle that only leads back to the panic-producing environment you now occupy, but instead guides you away from these slave-holding institutions and toward a freedom you have yet to experience (a freedom of thought that leads to an unknown future)? That unknown future itself is a source of stress since we are all more comfortable with the known than with the unknown. But fear of the unknown should not keep you from pursuing it, because you have all demonstrated that you can adapt to most anything.

Whether you know it or not, you inspire me! Yes, you who have done things that you are now paying the price for. You who have done things that I have never been forced to do. You who have done things that even you condemn yourself for doing and wish you could undo. You who have been labeled 'criminals" and "menaces" — you inspire me! You represent what the human spirit is capable of and, while I hope you make the changes in your behavior that will lead you from here to a better future, I will always find my own strength to go forward in the human spirit that burns so hot and so brightly within you. I thank you all for that inspiration, and pray that the strength you have demonstrated so many times in your young lives will inspire you to become what I know you can become. To you all, I am indebted, and give my thanks.

Now for the topics at hand... The first topic, "Put it to sleep" - On July 9, 2007 the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) laid to rest the "N" word in Detroit Michigan, amongst hundreds of onlookers. This ceremony symbolically put to rest a word that is an offensive, racial slur to many people for hundreds of years. This week we want to know what word you'd put to rest if you had a chance. It can be a racist word, or a word like love or hate. It can be any word really, but please stay away from putting names of people and streets to rest because we don't want to publish threats. So if you could hold a funeral for ONE WORD, what would that word be and why would you put it to rest?

The second topic, "Who cares? – Who cares?..."

The last topic, "A Cold And Wintry Tale" - It's been so hot, that we've been thinking about cooler weather. That made us think about the first time we ever saw snow. What about you? Do you have a snow story to share with us? If you've never seen snow, tell us about a time when it was cold enough to snow — or just tell us what you think it's like to play in the snow.

OK, readers, enjoy this fabulous issue, we'll be back shortly with plenty more from The Beat Within.

This issue goes out to the family of Will Roy, whose lady Anna last week gave birth to their first child, a baby boy! Congrats to you all!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Volunteers: Rebecca Wahlgren, Elizabeth Crawford, Jen Zimmer, Sarrah Babcock, and Morghan Velez Young.

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within greatefully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs – California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Christensen Fund, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Morris Stulsaft Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, S. H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Foundation, Shinnyo-en Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stone Circles Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, The California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, the Zellerbach Family Fund and individual donors.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillio County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

Project WHAT!

From The Beat: This is our final installment, for the time being, of writings from Project WHAT! If you didn't get a chance to read the last three week's of writings, allow us to encourage you to read what Project WHAT! is all about, before you dive into their latest contribution. First, we want to thanks Anna Wong, Program and Policy Director of Project WHAT, who wrote the introduction, and has so kindly share these important entries with us all. This week we want to welcome Zoe Willmott to the pages of The Beat Within with her powerful and thoughtful piece of writing.

Did you know?

Over 7 million children have a parent under the supervision of the criminal justice system, which means they have a parent who is in prison or jail, on probation, or on parole. That's one in ten of the nation's children.
We estimate that more than 88,000 youth under age 25 in San Francisco, Alameda, and Contra Costa counties have a parent under the supervision of the criminal justice system.
Incarceration disproportionately impacts people of color and poor people. More than 60 percent of the people in prison are racial and ethnic minorities.

The story that follows is the last in this series from Bay Area youth sharing firsthand what it's like to have a parent in prison or jail. These young authors, all of whom participate in a program called Project WHAT!—We're Here and Talking, will be featured in upcoming issues of The Beat Within. The common thread tying together these authors' stories is that each of them has had a parent incarcerated. Not all of the youth focus directly on their parent's incarceration, but they write about their own struggles, successes, dreams, and goals. This week's story is by Zoe Willmont. We hope this story and past stories inspire you and give you insight into these young people's lives.

I am proud to be the Program Director of Project WHAT! As Program Director, I have the opportunity to work closely with the talented and courageous group of teenagers and young adults who make up our team. Project WHAT! creates opportunities for the team to empower themselves and educate others by speaking out about parental incarceration.

Project WHAT!:

Provides participants with the opportunity for meaningful, paid work experience;
Helps participants develop skills in areas such as teamwork, writing, research, public speaking, facilitation, and fundraising; and
Supports participants in achieving their life goals and ambitions.

In only one year, the Project WHAT! team has:
Reached more than 350 service providers and youth by doing presentations and trainings in the Bay Area and beyond;
Traveled to Seattle in the fall of 2006 to present at a conference (and has been accepted to present at a conference in Atlanta in the fall of 2007);
Created a resource guide for teens in the Bay Area with a parent in prison or jail. The 56-page guide answers common questions that children have when a parent is incarcerated and has a section that explains complex jail and prison visiting procedures in plain language.

Project WHAT! is a program of Community Works, a nonprofit organization based in Berkeley, California. For more information, and to access the resource guide, call us at (510) 486-2340 or go online to: www.community-works-ca.org/programs/projectwhat.html. If you're a young person who has a parent incarcerated and want a copy of our resource guide, we'll mail you a free copy. We hope you enjoy these stories.

-Anna Wong, Program and Policy Director Project WHAT!

Sunday Morning

Every Sunday morning I would wake up to a fresh glass of ripe orange juice, that tasted so sweet, but I never could quite keep it down. Tension knotted in the depths of my stomach, anxiety that made me shake. An interesting mixture of nervousness and excitement flowed through my pulsating veins as I stepped into the back seat of our silver/gray beat-up Toyota. We whizzed past the dead brown stench of dried hills, covered completely with black and white cows, blurring in my sleepy eyes, followed by the heat of still air as we sat in traffic for what must have been hours. We drove through an army base, a training camp that existed right across the street from my destination: my mother. She was hidden behind barbed wire, metal detectors, cold steel, shackles and clanking chains that kept her inside of this place, of this prison. As my dad and I pulled up to the front gates on those Sunday mornings, my six-year-old body became restless.

Form after form to fill out, line after line to wait in. The processing room to get into the prison visiting room was filled with antsy families, some from as far away as other countries. Little children anxiously ran around, and their parents were yelled at for not keeping them under control. Then, of course, were the teary-eyed folks who had been sent home because they didn't follow the dress code perfectly, or whatever other reasons the guards decided they needed to send someone home that day. Confirmation that I am not smuggling drugs into the prison as a four-year-old, metal detectors and even more forms to fill out while waiting in even more lines, took up a good portion of the morning. Then, finally, being escorted by multiple guards, watching all of us like hungry vultures, ready to swoop down at any moment. And then, the visiting room, which brought even more waiting. Staring at those thick beige doors, desperately hoping that every time the red light came on, my mom would be the one to walk out. Eventually, she would, but each time I stood there waiting, I feared that she would never come out to see me again. She quickly walked through the doors, standing tall at five foot even. Her short, dyed-red hair bobbing at her shoulders, and kind face immediately put me at ease. I remember rushing across the room to get to her, and holding on so tight I thought I'd never let go. That is until a guard came along, staring us down, his eyes working like pliers, determined to pull us apart.

Those visits flew by so quickly; I can hardy recall the time we actually spent together. I do remember just wanting to sit there and talk forever, wanting her to know what my life was like, and also the curiosity in my head of what it must be like for her to be stuck in this place, but of course, I never got around to those questions. I was too

continued on next page

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scared to know. I didn't want to think about what she was going through, so I left it up to my imagination. Still, the questions stayed in my mind: what was prison like? How did they treat her? How did she survive here? I didn't want to make our only time together depressing I just avoided asking the questions. Instead, I would tell her about school, about my teachers and my friends. Her smooth voice and calming tone made me feel like I was back at home, just for a second. She knew how to make me giggle and laugh, making the experience of visiting as enjoyable as it possibly could be. She would tell jokes and tickle me (only she knew my most ticklish spots).

Occasionally I brought my best friend with me to visit my mom, so I could bring the different parts of my life together in the same beige visiting room. I was never ashamed that my mom was in prison. I was more proud than anything else, because I could show people that no matter what she's done in her past, she's still my mom. I felt the need to teach people that being incarcerated doesn't make you a bad person. Whether you are guilty or not, prisoners are still human beings, just like anyone else. My mom was my mom no matter what, and her incarceration never changed that. I was proud that she stood up for herself, that she didn't let the prison environment become an excuse to be depressed. She never let them take her spirit, which always amazed me.

That visiting room holds so many of my childhood memories, it's almost like a part of me grew up there. I still recall the first time I got yelled at by a guard. I was four years old and I'd gone over to say hello to another prisoner, a friend of my mom's who I had also known. Of course, this type of behavior is "unacceptable" in the visiting room, because you may only have any form of contact with the inmate you are signed up to visit. Now, how was a four-year-old supposed to understand this? How was I to comprehend that it was not allowed for me to say hello to someone I know. That experience taught me to fear guards and police officers, and eventually to hate them. I grew up being scared of the people in uniform who I had to be around every weekend.

I also spend a considerable amount of time without my mom in the visiting room. In the kids play area, where she wasn't allowed, I would go and play with other kids while my parents had their visit. I drew pictures, and played with toys. Some of the older girls used to braid my hair, and we would all just try and make the best of the situation. Knowing we all had something in common made it easier. There was no awkward period to get over the question of where you're parents are. Occasionally, they would have someone directing an arts and crafts project. While this was all fun for me, I often sat there staring through the window, back out at my mom. All I longed for was to be by her side.

With my mom, we talked, we laughed, we cried, until it was time to say goodbye. Saying goodbye to my mom was the one thing I swore I would never be able to do again, yet every week I was forced to. Those goodbyes, when everyone got quiet, all the mothers with tears sliding down their cheeks, mirroring their sobbing children. I would hold on to her for as long as possible, we repeated "I Love You's" and" Goodbye's" to each other. Even today, going back to that visiting room makes my eyes tear-up, just watching other children desperately clinging on to their own mothers, just how I used to be. I just left her with the strongest hope in the depths of my heart that it would not be the last time I said good-bye to her. Leaving my mom was the hardest think I've ever had to do, yet it was the only option I had. I wanted so much to take her home with me, show her my room, my school, my friends, my life. Every time I had a chance to blow out birthday candles, or make a wish in a fountain, it was for her to come home with me. All I desired was for that missing piece to be filled in, for her to be able to complete my puzzle. But she couldn't. Which is why I will never forget those Sunday morning visits, my one chance to be a part of her life.

-Zoe Willmott, Project WHAT!

The Visiting Room

for my mom

childhood memories
cement walls
surrounded by cold gray
enclosed with hard steel
uncomfortable plastic chairs
around tiny two-foot beige tables
I sit there
waiting

"Donna Willmott, Please report to
visiting room"
robotic voices
still echo from my four-year-old mind
ice-cold stares from guards
quickly awaken anxiety in the depths
of my belly
cause me to swallow
gulp down my uneasiness
disguise it as best I can

rush and hug
from across the room kisses blown
tender arms scoop me up
across the same two-foot table
which once looked so small
now gigantic
separates us
my desire to hug you/my own mother
eliminated
by side-ways glances from prison
guards

weekly trips to FCI Dublin prison
time flies too quickly
to feel it rush past
before I know it
I'm torn between
desire to stay
be with you/my mother
and need to get away from this place
to go home
to a place where complexity
disappears
sharp pains in my stomach
reminders that it will soon be time
to say good-bye

desperate attempts to avoid
the awkward moment
of good-bye
intensified
by harsh prison environment
sour vomit
rises in my throat
tears trickle down
pale white cheeks

my most hated place
becomes my favorite
because of you
the visiting room
where I cry more tears
and crack more missing-tooth smiles
than anywhere else
place of my nightmares
wake up in shaky sweats
also the place of my dreams
the visiting room
is where I get
to be with
you

-Zoe Willmott, Project WHAT!

From The Beat: We are thrilled to include in this fabulous issue the final installment of this three-part series of writings from the powerful girls in Unit G2 in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall. This was all made possible thanks to the Osborne School Department, particularly their teacher, Ms. Bernadette Neizvestny. The young women known in this special section as the "Strong And Open Minded," give us readers plenty to read as they shed plenty of light on their world. With that said, lets give the floor to the young writes who are "Strong And Open Minded!" WE cannot wait to hear from them again! Thank you ladies!!

Rough Life

I've been through a lot of experiences with drugs and violence and gang banging. On the outs I deal with my abusive boyfriend and always having to look over my shoulder because of the cops.

The worst experience I ever had with drug was when I used to live in Modesto and I was gaked out of my mind, I was hallucinating.

I was chilling at school about 2am, and I thought my homies took an invisible pill. I was hearing whistling and voices and I was thinking that my homies were messing with me just trying to scare me or something. Another thing I thought I saw was black people in the trees. That was the most terrifying experience I had with dope. Most of the time I never get like that it's because that was one of my first time smoking.

With violence every time I hear that word I think of my boyfriend. Honestly I'm not trying to put my man on blast but I remember that one day when I walked in the house and he had a pizo in his hand. In my head I was thinking why is he smoking? Is he trying to impress me or something? When I sat down on the couch everything was cool between us then out of nowhere he told me to get into the room. I went inside the room and he started hitting me for no reason he took the shoe laces off my shoes and tied me up with it. After that, he put a pillow over my face. My boyfriend untied my shoe strings and when he did that, his homeboy Snoop walked in. I ran out of the house and he started to chase after me. He caught me and started hitting me again. After that I really don't remember anything. It's sad to know that the one guy you love with all your heart puts hands on you.

The last experience, "Gang bangin". Where should I start? I was at my homeboy Nathen's pad and we were just chopping it up about my man Chino because we got into an argument. I told homeboy that I was going to the park to think about my problems and what should I do. So I was kicking it at the park with a couple of homies then I told them I was leaving so I left. As I was walking back to the hood I decided to walk through Timber Woods Apartment. I was coming from the parking lot and two rivals jumped from behind so I couldn't see who they were and to top it off they were two guys. Those rivals were wearing all black and one of them had a pano over his face so I couldn't see who he was and the other one just had his hood on. Luckily I didn't end up in the hospital. I'm thankful to be alive today.

Everything happens for a reason, the only thing I have learned from my past experiences is to always watch my back and carry a knife and to not smoke that much dope and next time my man puts hands on me I'm going to leave him for good. I'm sorry to say that but it's the truth.

My thoughts for this topic are when I am going to stop using drugs and to stop gang banging and to not keep putting up with my boyfriends shhh. The answer is I'm not going to stop gang banging and I am trying to get clean and sober because if I don't then that will affect my future.

If I could change all the bad shhh that happened in my life I wouldn't because everything happens for a reason. I use to tell myself "you only get one life to live and I'm going to live it how I want:. Now that I think about it I want to be successful in life and not to be a drug addict and not living on the streets.

-Juzette

My Life

Everyday is a struggle for me and my family. For my mom who's almost 60 years old, it's waking up at 5am, so she can make it to work on time, so she can feed me, and have a roof over our head.

For me, it's what happens to me. I used to always ask why bad things happen to me. When I was younger I was bad, but as I got older I started to want to be good, to help my mom around the house and make her proud.

I was 15 in December '06; I was playing basketball with my friends. It was around 9:30pm, so I decided to walk home. So as I walked home, talking on the phone, I got close to my house and told my boyfriend I would call him when I got inside my house.

I was walking through the field and there's this man walking in my direction, but I didn't think anything of it. As he got closer to me, then within a blink of an eye he grabs me and throws me to the grass, choking me and telling me to be quiet. But I still scream as he pulls a gun to my head.

I get quiet, he starts to pull down my sweats and underwear and he unzipped his pants. As I lay there, while he's raping me he tells me not to say anything to anybody, and that he knows where I live. I never said anything about what happened because I was too scared.

In January of '07 I find out that I was pregnant and I knew they were his, because me and my boyfriend weren't having sex.

In April of '07, I made the hardest choice in my life, abortion. I'm so against abortion but I couldn't have babies by someone who raped me. It wasn't 'till I had the abortion when I realized that I didn't want to kill them, but I did.

I felt bad about what I had done and went back to my bad ways, hanging out with people that have got me into trouble in the past.

Still not telling anyone how I really got pregnant. For some reason I felt like it was my fault, it wasn't long before I was stopped by the police. I was so blind and hurt and depressed that I went right back to being bad.

As soon as I got here, in juvenile hall, I realized I don't want to live this way. In July '07, I came out and finally said something about being raped, what had happened to me. I felt free but I wasn't, I was trapped in the walls of juvenile hall. I started to ask myself why bad things happen to me again. When I got it, I was the most depressed ever. Just when my depressions were starting to go away, they came back worse. I couldn't even eat, I can barely eat now.

I'm really not a bad kid, I wish I could just get out of this so I could be free again. But you don't always get what you want.

I miss my mom. I miss tucking her in at night and fixing her grilled cheese sandwiches. When I do get out, I'll never hold anything from my mom. So that's what life has been like for the last 8 months.

-Cella

Reckless Life

Gangsta livin' that's my motto
Street life isn't always easy you'll always fight a battle
Life may be hard or easy it's just how you live it
I party like a rock star now that I'm still a teen
Can't trust anyone what if that person is a dope fiend?
Gang bang because I know I can put it down
Smiling always in my face will never be a frown
The last laugh is always mine
It will always be 'till the end of my time
Popping E-pills, my homies and I would all thizz
Speaking my mind I never stay in a freeze
Chillin' with Julio my one and only man
I love him very much I don't know if that's good or if I should say damn
He is everything to me
I hope he loves me too and his wife one day I'll be
Making bank slanging meth
If you have never tried it don't try to test
Everyday would be a white rocky dream sniffing coke
So many lines as if it was a joke
Drinking all day every day because that's my thing to do
Posted in the hood me and the homies acting like fools
I always have my faith
Because it ain't nothing but a g thing: and with that line I'm out
stay up late

-Judy

My Reality

Get a clue and expand your view
Open up your horizons and start getting open minded
Two different people's opinions can be two different truths
Get real with yourself and find out which one rings true for you
The truth for me is Drug, Sex, and Violence
Stuck in a world that is so divided
How people are ignorant and criticize this way of life
How for me it's a daily routine, a struggle, a fight
How people don't know what the hell is really going on
How in reality everything ties all into one
How they replace one for another
First comes sex, the violence, and then drugs to cope
I like drugs
Sometimes violence
Sex with my significant other
That's just the remedy that keeps me from going under
Violence over drugs and dope deals
Sex to get dope
AIDs from having unsafe sex from being too high
I know it is screwed up but we all live a crooked life
So what's the difference between you and I
Everybody thrives off one
Sex, drugs, or violence?

-Twiggy

My Street Life Experience

Hello what's up Beat? Well today I'm going to be writing about my street life experience.

While at the age of 12 years old, I was such a good girl. I had straight A's and even got a scholarship for college in the 7th grade.

After I met a few girls and started to hang around with them, my grades dropped to C's. I knew that I was doing the wrong things by not going to school and staying away from home. I pretty much didn't care, because of the fact that I was having such a good time.

Three months before seventh grade was finally over, I got jumped by these girls for the first time. That made me get really angry. Then I fought them little hood rats when I seen them running around the streets. The summer was finally over and 8th grade was just around the corner.

The first day of school you had to pick who you were going to roll with. I took my pick and became one of them. We wouldn't do anything with the rivals because the teachers and staff would always stop the arguing.

On my 8th grade year I fought two girls from the rival gang and also got jumped by seven girls. Of course I wouldn't let things pass like nothing ever happened.

School was just a daily routine, everyday nothing new only drama and new kids. Sarah's lil cousin got me hella blowed for the first time when I turned fourteen years old. I ain't going to lie, pero that shhh was good!

My grades went down to straight F's and to be honest I knew that I had to stop doing what I was doing and do things the right way.

I got kicked out of Lee Mathson Middle School and went to a new school. I made a promise to my moms that I was going to start making better choices. That never happened and I just became even worse than I was before.

At the age of fifteen I ran away from home and pretty much learned a lot from the streets. I loved being on the streets getting drunk, high, and doing what not.

When I hit high school and thought about all the things that I been through, I made a change. I dropped the gang life because I didn't see no point of it. I also dropped a lot of my old friends and got new ones, now I pretty much just party, club, and have a good time with my friends.

My brother just got killed seven months ago because of the gangs. It really affected me in a lot of ways and I have a drug and alcohol problem. I use drugs and alcohol to forget about my pain.

I am now seventeen years old and locked up in the hall. It's going to be hard for me to stay away from the hall because I am now caught up in the system. I have a lot goals in my life and I am looking forward to accomplishing them in the future. I want to change for myself and also for my moms that's been through a lot. I really want to prove people wrong and show them that no matter what I have done in the past I could still succeed in life. I am willing to take a chance to the future that I have in front of me waiting.

So for those that think they can't make it, yes you could, but you always got to think positive. Take a chance!

-Lizeth

Violence

I really don't have many experiences with drugs, but I have experiences with sex and violence. My life with violence has been ever since I was like around four. My mom and dad used to fight all the time around us. He used to beat her up really bad. Sometimes he would come home drunk and for no reason just starts hitting her out of nowhere. Me and my sisters and my brother just used to sit there and watch him do it.

So like around six, some girls wanted to fight my older sister. These girls were like fourteen and fifteen. So we fought and that's when I started getting violent. Ever since then I've been fighting because that's what I grew up around.

The reason why I was here for the first time was for fighting and for a stolen car. This boy at Independence High School hit my sister and I had flash backs of my dad hitting my mom and I took off my belt and started hitting him with it. If I never grew up around violence, I probably wouldn't be here.

My sex experiences are really not that bad. I never had sex for drugs or money. Maybe in relationships but that's personal. What I don't understand is why girls would have sex for drugs. That's how guys and girls get diseases like HIV and AIDS. We shouldn't even have sex until we're married but we just grow up to fast.

-Lil Snaps

Hush Little Baby

Hush little baby, please don't cry
Doin' my best to make it right
Sorry I can't treat you like a king
Can't even wish for a plastic ring
I see your sadness when you sleep
This was our hand, now we sleep on the street
No shoes, no socks, just our cold bare feet
We're lucky if we have three meals to eat
I miss mom, too; she died givin' birth
Life's unfair—it's hell on earth
I love you, baby, please don't cry
I thank God for even giving you life

-Lil' Hedge Hog, San Francisco

From The Beat: This poem is so sad. Are you writing it to your younger brother? If so, who is taking care of him?

Love yo' family 'cause they love you and would do anything for you.

Time To Change

I used to take everything for granted in my life,
that's why I'm in J-Hall.
I did everything my mom said don't' do,
because I wanted to kick it on my block
but I never knew.
I never knew all the bad things that went on out there,
so I started doing drugs to hide my tears.
Whenever I was smacked, I was in the zone
and when I came down –
I just wanted to go home.
But I couldn't find the courage to tell my mom
so I popped two more,
'cause wit' the pills I had a special bond.
I couldn't stop 'cause I loved the feeling
but like an orange I was peeling.
Every step forward,
I took ten-steps back
the life I was living was really whack.
So when I get out I'm gonna stay strong
because being locked up is nowhere I belong.
So what I'm sayin' ain't just hall talk,
when I get out I'm gonna walk the walk.
So anyone who gonna try to hold me down,
I don't even want to see you around.
So say what you got to say and do what you got to do.
I'll be me and you just be you.
I'm not gonna let anything anyone says get to me
because I'm gonna be the best I could be.
I'm gonna stay off the drugs and finally go home
because I know I can't fight this alone.
So when I get out I'm gonna do great,
because I know I could change.
It's never too late.

-Skull Head, Santa Clara

From The Beat: These are powerful words about what you are going to do outside the Hall. We've heard that the key to success is setting an intention. I hope it is going as well as you dreamed. Keep writing, no matter what.

Failure

So if I could hold one funeral for one word it would be…
Failure
I'm damn tired of all these jerks saying:
"You going to fail because you're a failure…"
If I could, I would put it to the grave…
Failure…failure…failure….
It's so hard to brush this word off my mind
Because look where I'm at…
Locked up in the halls
And most of the staff looks into your eyes
And all they see in me is…
Failure
As hard as it is…
Failure is on my mind
It does kill me inside to be locked up as shhh…
Bitter tears…
Purple fists…
When I'm back in my box after
Hearing, seeing, and thinking….
Of failure
I look forward to tomorrow…
So I can wake up
To the new life of….
Success…
Because failure…
Is six feet under…

-Stephanie, San Francisco

From The Beat: There is nothing but success in this fine poem! We think you've made a great choice of words you'd like to see buried. But since we can't really bury vocabulary, stop listening to people (in here or out there) who think they know what your future is going to be. They don't. That is in your hands, not theirs, and in your hands we see success!

My So-Called Friends

My so-called friends… where they at? I'm sitting in this box wondering about them. They probably ain't worried 'bout me though. They probably think of me from time to time, but since they free, they don't really care.

My so-called friends get locked up with me and one of them snitched. Now they get out, go to Chicago, then come back and try to say they sorry.

My so-called friends say they write me, but I haven't received one letter from them.

My so-called friends ain't going to do my time for me.

My so-called friends always put money over females, but females be the ones that really want to know what's going on wit' you.

My so-called friends when I talk to them on phone, they talk and say they miss you, but don't give a damn what you going through.

The only real friends you got is yo' family 'cause they going to stick wit' you though thick and thin. Love yo' family 'cause they love you and would do anything for you. Everybody locked up, keep yo' heads up 'cause we going to get out. But when you get out, spend more time wit' the fam ('cause they the only one who come see you anyway).

-Gold M, San Francisco

From The Beat: When you were on the outs, did you spend a lot of time thinking about (or writing to) your friends who were locked up? It's just natural that while you're on ice in here, life goes on out there. That's why you don't want to be in places like this! We think you've got it right, except we want to add one more "real friend" to your definition, and that's you, yourself! A real friend will not lead you into trouble or into the hall, so be a real friend to yourself so that when you get out of here, it's the last time you have to see the inside of this place! You've got what it takes to move beyond this temporary fall and move into a brighter (and free) future. Now it's up to you to put those gifts to work!

Who Cares, Who Cares?

Who cares? I care.

Do they care? No they don't care.

Does he care? Maybe if he knew me.

Does she care? Maybe if she knew me.

I care but those people, they don't care, because I'm a stranger. Why should they care for someone they don't know? A person has the mind and capacity to think and judge, to care about me or not, but most people - they don't care. They just want to live their lives and move on, just move forward, not stopping to look back or to the side.

He'd care, if he knew me. If they knew me for a long time, they would care. If we'd just met, then he wouldn't care. He's move on without anything ever happening. If he took the time to know me then he would care and help anyway that he could.

She'd care, if she knew me. If she knew me for a couple of years, then she would care and help as much as she could, too, but if she didn't know me, why would she care. I'm just a stranger. Why would she waste her time on me? If she cared and I was still a stranger to her, then she would get the time to know me, and try to help me as well. In the end, the only person that cares is me, because the only person that would take care and look after oneself is oneself.

Your family cares and they would do anything to help, and your best friend, not friends, would try to help. Those people who will be the next to get to know me and show that they care by trying to help will always be by your side even though you're far from them. Oh, they're there all right, trying their hardest to show how they care.

But there are those people who just look after themselves and their own family who just walk by without a single care of the world. It's ok though, because they each have their own lives and problems to take care of. They're just too busy to have another problem on their hands, so it's ok. It's life. That's how the world is lived. People work, learn, fight, love, teach, help, and live life. So, it's ok if they don't care, because in the very end, who cares? I will care about me, and the people I know, or get to know.

-John/Harry Potter, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You are a philosophical person. And we detect not a drop of bitterness in you. What we hope very much is that you will learn to care enough about yourself to stay out of the hall. It's a huge world, full of wonderful possibilities. And also, the world has its problems. We need your energy to help solve some of them. It's hard to do that when you're locked up.

My Alcohol Problem

What's up Beat? I'm going to write about whatever comes to my mind. Well, what's on my mind right now is what gets me in here. What gets me in here is my alcohol problem.

Every time I get drunk I become very violent. I can't control myself. It's bad enough that alcoholism runs in my family. At first I was in denial of my problem, but I soon slowly started to realize that I had a problem…

(To be continued)

-Angel, San Francisco

From The Beat: There are two reasons why this is a POW. First, we want to give you the props you deserve for recognizing the seriousness of alcoholism, and recognizing that you have a problem, and that you need to deal with it. (You really do!) But second, we want everyone to read this piece, because we believe most of our writers are in denial about their own alcohol problems (which we read about in every issue of The Beat). So we hope your courage will inspire others. As an alcoholic friend of ours once said, "There's no problem that alcohol can't make worse!"

Snow Makes The Day Better

It was about a year and a half ago, around March. Two months before that, two of my friends were involved in a car accident. I had seen one of them in juvenile hall right before it happened. The friend I saw in the hall was in a coma. The other one passed away.

Well, I live in Santa Cruz, and in Santa Cruz you usually don't see snow. That March I was still depressed about my friends. It was late at night. The lights were out and I was asking for a miracle – something to make me happy. All of a sudden, my friend comes flying up the stairs. "It's snowing! It's snowing!" I had never seen it snow at the beach before, and for that one second my mind was off everything bad that had been going on in my life. I thank God for that day. That was a winter tale I wish my homeboys had been there to see. It was a wonderful night.

-Justine, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is a good story. We wonder, of course, how the friend who survived the accident is doing now. We hope he gets to see the snow someday, maybe even at the beach.

Who Cares, Who Cares

Man, nobody cares. Unless you make yourself into somebody, people don't care. You have to make something out of yourself. Don't let anyone put you down. I have had people tell me in my life that I wouldn't be able to graduate from high school, but guess what… I graduated!

I'm an '07 graduate. Now I can do something with my life, but throughout the process I have had to prove to people and to the system that I can do good in my life. But then I got lots of people that are behind me, that have my back, that want me to do better in life.

I want to beat the system by doing my time, just gotta thug it out!

-Serg, San Francisco

From The Beat: Congratulations! By graduating, you have shown us that you don't just have to "thug it out," you can make your time productive. And you have! Yes, you have proven to all those haters that you are not what they think you are, but even more important than "them" is what you have proven to yourself. Yes, you can definitely do something with your life, and if you keep moving in the same direction, you definitely will!

Put It To Sleep

If I had to put one word to sleep it would be the "B" word, because it's disrespectful to women and men. It's more disrespectful to a woman because it is directed to a woman more than men.

I grew up wit' sisters and my moms, and that word is one of the worst words to use around them because they always going to think it is being directed towards them. I can't lie. I then also used that word towards a female. But I am trying to change and not use that word because I wouldn't want anybody calling my moms or sister them words.

Before you call another female a "B" think about the strong women you got in yo' family.

Much love to da Beat. Hope y'all keep comin' so we can get some of this stress out.

-Gold M, San Francisco

From The Beat: We are always thrilled to find a young person who does not just accept what everyone else is doing, but who thinks for himself! We admire the honesty of this piece — the "confession" that you've violated your own desire not to use or hear this word, while making a real effort to change. That is admirable, and we give you real props for examining yourself and finding things you want to change. Everyone — including us — should do that because we have brains to think with and not just to accept what we see and hear. Thank you for using yours! Keep thinking and keep moving forward.

Thrive To Succeed

I close my eye's to visualize myself on a successful rise.

Thoughts images often flash in my mind of paradise.

Success is the only thing that catches my interest, and is also my favorite topic.

A lot of people don't understand me when I'm speaking out of my own logic.

Me, I'm just trying to live my life and understand the realistics of reality

But I'm often brought down by the statistics of inequality.

So I dream of an infantry of my people strapped with the tools of intelligence.

A kingdom of Polynesians living with the mentality of being diligent.

So I often devise a strategy to bring success into my environment.

I'm just trying to leave to leave a good example for my little ones, something that's going to inspire them.

Because I want my little ones to live past there retirement.

I'm just trying to exemplify how I struggle to keep a positive stature.

Me, I'm not chasing my dreams I'm hunting them down for the capture.

Because success is something that I'm always going to take a stab at like a knife.

But overall I'm just trying to complete the book of my life.

-Kaho, Alameda

From The Beat: You're one page further on in that book, now that you're in camp, and one step closer to becoming the leader you say you want to be. The first revolution takes place in the leader's own mind. So tell us how you reached yours!?

Close Call

One day we go to my girl Layla's birthday party. Hella heads are there chilling, popping, smoking and dancing, what not. I was with my two older sisters and my ninja Steven, and some fool tries to come at my ninja all sideways and what not.

The fool was all drunk and not in the right frame of mind, talking his shhh my sista gets when it was his bad.

So the same ninja goes into the party. Everyone is repping their shhh and their area code - just straight going dumb. That ninja goes and disrespects everyone. It gets out of hand and they take it outside.

Two SUVs pull up, they all come out. Everyone is funking and what not. Before you know it, that ninja pulls a knife out and some other fool starts shooting. I get stuck on stupid and just freeze. That ninja points a gun at me. He's like six feet away from me. My ninja superman and my boy try to tell me to run and duck. I couldn't move, even though I wanted to. My ninja tackles me and the bullet barely got my ninja and that fool got shot like two times. But I was coo'. I could have got shot but my ninja saved me.

-Nono, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You are very, very fortunate. But until the day comes when people in your crowd say no to violence, our advice is to stay home, or find new friends. You boy friend was quick thinking enough to save you, and at considerable risk to himself. You can't count on that kind of heroism. You have to make better decisions. We hope your boyfriend recovered quickly from his wound.

Worst Day Ever

My worst day ever was when my mom passed away. I know a lot of kids who say they hate their mom and wish she was dead. But my mom meant the world to me.

When I was little I never had anything. I was one of the poorest people at my school. My mom did the best she could. Whenever I wanted something, she would do the best she could to get it for me. She was sick for a long time, so I had grow up fast.

My step dad was a drug addict, so he didn't help.

Then, when I was 12, my mom went to the hospital. She was in there for two and a half months. That year was the first time I spent without my mom. Then on January 23, 2002, I went to the hospital to see her. I was there with my family for an hour. We left, and 15 minutes later we got a call from the hospital to come back. When we got there we found out that my mom had passed away. It was hard for me to cope with the fact that she left me. I didn't know what was going to happen. But then my uncle took me and my brother and my sister in.

RIP Angie Cordero.

-Jesse, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Jesse, we know that you've heard this before, but it's the truth. You won't ever get completely over a loss like that. But you will learn how to live with it. And the time will come when you will welcome any thoughts of your mother – good thoughts or bad thoughts. All memories of her will become precious. You are a lucky fellow to have such a generous uncle. We hope you come to grips with what brought you to the hall. We know you've heard this one before, too, but you can honor your mom's memory by working hard and having a good life. That's what she worked so hard for.

The Ghetto Baby Grows Into A Rose

The truth hurts and life is shady
Moms then went crazy
'Cause of her ghetto baby
She's watched that rose grow
From a seed
Through the crack in the concrete
Into a mean-spirited rose
With a bad attitude
That will not face defeat
Its misery
Then has turned into pain
For you and it

Even though this rose is still sweet
With a vibe that will start a whole garden
From right out of the concrete
This rose is only positive
Around a bush of bad roses
Is that why it's always around a bad bunch?
Can you answer that question?

While it grew up
It saw all types of things
If it was a human
It would live a nightmare
Not a dream
So bad that it would kill
Its mother's sweet spirit
Until you rest in peace

-Dubb, San Francisco

From The Beat: You have a lot of insight into your own mind. What comes out in your "bad" attitude is that you've been really hurt. You also have a terrific attitude sometimes, and a good heart. Please don't let whatever has happened to you cause you to lose heart. It's almost time for you to build your own life. We hope you'll encourage your positive side to grow and flourish into a beautiful, gorgeous, wild rose.

Baby Cries

Baby cries
Blinding light
Take the first breath
Moms' on the right
Pops' on the left
Doc is 'bout to leave
That one quick moment
I was free

"Blink"
Preschool
Gotta wear the smock
Snacks, then bed time
Wake up
Hear nursery rhymes
Time to go to dad's
Mom's tomorrow
Divorce got me
Filled wit' sorrow

"Blink"
Middle school
Kickballs crackin'
Do my homework every day
No slackin'
Pokemon at 3
Dinner time
No treats

"Blink"
High school
Family gone wrong
Cancer sticks
Keepin' me calm
No more sc'oo'
Gotta make the money
Got everyone thinking
I'm a dummy

-Lil' Hedge Hog, San Francisco

From The Beat: You've written your young life's story in a beautiful, sad poem. Your parents getting divorced must have broken your heart. But don't let your family tragedy destroy your life, your dreams, your future. Nobody thinks you're a dummy, because you aren't. You're very smart and inspired, as anyone knowing you and reading this poem will agree.

The "N" Word

People use the N-word like it's some of their folks first and last name. How I know because I do it myself. My mother has to get on ma line for saying it like it was someone's first and last name.

But it ain't how you say it! It's who says it. If a Caucasian person says it, someone will get all uptight and want to hurt that person. But if an African-American person like your Grandmother etc. hear you say the "N" word, she will beat you half to death because she knows what it feel like to be called that word and be beaten by people who take glory for that word.

-Anton, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's the terrible history that goes with this derogatory word that your grandmother knows so much better than people your age, which is why that "N" word is so casually used today. But that history is real. We're not sure if you're saying that you want to try to banish this word from your own vocabulary, or just from the mouths of white people. If that is what you're saying, we wonder if the same applies to other "hate" words you might use. For example, would you think it's all right for a girl to call another girl the "B" word, but not all right for a boy to use it?

Words of Pain: The Enemy Of Peace

There are two words that are in the English language that I believe should be omitted: Those words are superiority and inferiority. These words have caused strife throughout every age of every society in the world. For all of the world's history, there has been a race, creed, religion, culture, or any such words that classify a group of individuals with something in common, that has been considered inferior to the people around them. Such beliefs of inferiority and superiority triggered animosity throughout the world in forms of wars and hate and other such negative connotations with racism and discrimination. While we are at it, let us take out other words that create the beliefs of superiority and inferiority so that newer words do not rise up and take their place with the same annotations and connotations. These words would be: minority, majority, race, creed, denomination, ethnicity, racism, discrimination, and all the words that classify human beings as a certain race.

Without these words maybe then the world will have a chance to be a utopian society as it was envisioned in many popular novels and movies. Maybe then the world will not have the repeats of the most terrible wars of the past such as the Crusades, World War I and World War II. Maybe then genocide will no longer be an everyday occurrence in at least one newspaper around the world. Maybe then freedom, love and prosperity will exist worldwide. Maybe then the dreams of the most mystic people will come true: worldwide peace.

However, dreams are only dreams, humans will continue to be humans, and the world will continue to go down in shambles by evolving its forms of racism and discrimination for every new law that arises which puts a roadblock in the way for the chronically racist people in the world. Dreams will always only be dreams until such time as the dream is shared by a multitude who decides to make their dreams more than a dream; a reality.

-James, Santa Clara

From The Beat: First of all, this is an amazingly written piece. World peace is a mystical dream, but do you really believe that all ideas of race should be eliminated? Isn't it difference that makes the world beautiful? Perhaps instead of killing words we should somehow create more words like: understanding, tolerance, love and compassion.

In My Shoes

A lot of people think of me as stupid, sometimes funny but what people fail to see is the Jamil I'm trying to hide is the good person. I don't know. But if you take a look at my life there's nothing stupid or funny about it.

I've been through a lot, but I still find a way to smile and believe me it's hard. It's hard because I'm always thinking, always trying to think of good times in my life but every good memory ends bad.

I've been a victim of physical and verbal abuse. I am also a crack baby as some would call me. Been through more things then you could imagine. My own family is skeptical about getting me back to live with them after living in a group home since I was three. You would think they would open their arms.

When I watch other call loved ones it saddens me to see me not on the phone I have no one to call, no one to send mail to. I am lonely.

-Jamil, Alameda

From The Beat: You are such a strong person, watching you write this piece and then read it aloud to the group. We applaud your courage and we truly wish we could give you a hug right now. You dserve a hug at the very least and plenty of encouraging words. You are far from stupid, you have incredible skills, and we truly hope you put your heart and knowledge to work and in the end you find happiness and meaningful love and support.

Never Breathe

Breathe in, breathe out...
Time stands still
As I am going back in my memories
Fighting the monster
As I realize what he did to me
Breathe...
Don't panic
Concentrate...
Scars, beatings, alcohol
As I stand and watch
The drunk man fall
Four to five days
Wearing the same draws
Breathe...

I hear him coming...
Footsteps
Get under the bed
Hearts pounding
Please, God
Don't let him beat me
'Til I'm dead
Boom, boom, boom boom

Slash 1
The pain
It hurts
What did I do?
Now that I am older
I wish I could have killed you
Breathe...

Slash 2
No!
Please!
I am sorry
But I don't know what I did
Stop hitting me
Like I am a grown man
I am really just a kid

Slash 3
That's the last time
He'll put his hands on me again

I'll kill him
I'll kill him...
Body, wake up
You was talking in ya sleep

Nobody shall put their hands on me
Gotta free myself from
The prison in my mind
The prison in my mind
Has amazing designs
Soldiers with swords
Guard my time
In order to free myself
In my mind
I gotta write this last line

In time
I'll master by writing a thousand rhymes
Only God will tell in time
What I will find
At the end of my journey

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: This poem is so sad and hard to read. How did you survive, especially emotionally as well as physically, the beatings your father made you suffer? Does it help you to write about them? Or does it make you angrier and sadder? We're sure your poems will help anyone else who has also been abused, when they read them. We respect you for being able to put your pain out into your amazing poems.

In time I'll master by writing a thousand rhymes

Emotionally Disturbed

What up wit it beat? It's Kitti Kats. Yeah, I'm still here obviously. I just got off my watch sheet yesterday and moved to the top tier. Until the psych docs diagnosed me, I never thought I had a problem. What do they know about how I live? The medication is cool; but I'm tired of being observed and treated like a reject.

Of course I'm gonna be sad in here. I've been torn away from someone I love and forced to adapt to this lifestyle. Not to mention being surrounded by strangers, being locked in a place and having your life planned out for you. "I went to your schools, I went to your churches, I went to your institutional learning facilities, and you say I'm crazy." They wanted to hide me in an institution. All I wanted was to go home. I think mental illnesses are just excuse to feed us pills to erase our own thoughts. I'm not paranoid just bipolar.

-Kitti Kats, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, this is one of the most real pieces we have heard about mental illness and the medication of incarcerated youth in a long time. Have you ever read "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" by Ken Kesey – it has a lot to do with the power dynamics of mental illness and institutions. Maybe you should write your own book about your experiences.

The Struggle of Life

The one thing I want to put to sleep is the way I'm living.
The way I live is not right
most kids my age don't know what they are doing to the people that love them.
I was the same way I did not care about nothing
it took me a long time to realize what I was doing to the people that loved me.
Now that I have nothing but the walls in my cell I regret all the dumb shhh I was doing.
I was out if control I was doing things that you wouldn't eve think of.
I look back at all the stuff I was doing and it shocks me.
I thought I knew it all but really I knew a lil' bit and I had alot to learn.
When I get out of the hall I'm going to change my life around.
It will be hard but if you put your mind to it you can do it
you can do everything don't give up
'cause if you do then you won't ever do anything in life.

-Anthony, Alameda

From The Beat: What an amazing and thoughtful piece you deliver to these pages. We are so pulling for you to turn your life into something more meaningful than this incarceration. What is your plan?

Put "Hate" To Sleep

Let's put to sleep
A word felt deep
A word that makes
Some people weep
This word brings tears
Nobody hears
With all the pain
And all the fears
Where is the love
Can't people see
Let's bring the peace
For you and me
Won't that be great
So on this date
Let's put to rest
The word called "Hate"

-Danielle, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: This poem couldn't have said it better, Danielle. "Hate" is a very strong word, a word no one should ever have to hear. Continue with your writing, we at The Beat look forward to hearing more of your work.

Life's a witch

I know y'all agree
We just victims
Caught in a killin' spree
Ninjas think hell
Comes after the part
We take a bullet
And can't feel our heart
While I see that hell
Is the present
And the world around us
Is the devil's craft
And covered our minds
With a smoky mask
To think that we
Still have a chance
To redeem ourselves
But it leads to a dead end
Like a dried up well
Look around and open your eyes
The truth behind might blow yo' minds
Kids wit' raw flesh under their feet
And no food to eat
Five years old
Already drippin' pools of sweat
For 50 cents
They moms and pops
Ain't even trippin 'bout rent
'Cause they live in a cardboard box
Think that's funny?
'Cause it's not
I give them props
'Cause these less fortunate survive
While ninjas wit' money get shot
And die
Ninjas bustin' they dollars for daily dope
Even the poor people receive more hope
Dirty cops beatin' people
And keepin' blood money
To serve and protect
Now that shhh's funny
Think you can name a place
That's crime free?
Hit the cell
And holla at me
Ring ring ring
Ah, where you at?
Why you let those ninjas
Invent crack?
Why you actin'
Like you ain't listenin'?
I guess I gotta save myself
'Cause my clock is tickin'
I tried so hard, yeah
But it still ain't worked
Bust my ass off
Just to end up smirked
There's moments in our lives
Where we strive
To find that happy place
This shhh's just a game
Played out in our face
The devil's the game master
Wastin' our lives
He can restart the system
Wit' fire in his eyes
I think God put his controller down
'Because we didn't do
W'at he wanted us to
He gave us the truth
But we didn't listen
And started dissin'
And pissed him off
So he quit
And let the devil win the game
Now we the devil's toy
Livin' in the hell he made
It's too late for any of us to choose
'Cause look around
Game over, we lose

-Lil' Hedge Hog, San Francisco

From The Beat: You write beautifully, but/and out of despair, Lil' Hedge Hog. Maybe the best way to ward off the devil is to trust and rely on your own goodness. You don't write much about why your life is in the middle of a killing spree on the outs, but when you're free again, can you redesign your life to stay out of any mess in the streets? You can restart your life any way you want.

All For What?

As I look back on life and think about all the mistakes and bad decisions I've made, I can't help but think of all the people I've let down during the process. My sister, my girl and my grandparents, but most of all I let myself down. I let these lollypops get the best of me and I ended up back in here. Forget those people for praying on my downfall and hoping to see me where I am now.

I let my anger take over my soul and didn't think about my actions, and now I'm facing the repercussions for foolishness. I let the bullshhh infest my mind and the hate eat at my heart. I answered the devil's call knowing he'd let me fall. And even though something told me not to inside, I still had to ride.

I let my loved ones down and brought shame to my family. I left my son without a father and without hope, and for what? Respect? Naw. See, I disrespected myself by lowering my level and acting like a boy. Never again will I make a fool of myself and leave my fam in the cold over some loud mouth punk.

That's as real as it gets.

-Lonely, Santa Clara

From The Beat: As sad as this piece is, it's also uplifting and inspirational. You may have acted like a boy, but that's because you were a boy. It is very obvious from this that you are no longer a boy, but a man using a man's brain. Unlike so many, you do not point the finger outward towards "them" but inwards toward yourself. More than that, you've identified something critical to anyone who is serious about examining his or her life in an honest way, which is that "voice" inside "that told (you) not to..." Yes, it's true that you ignored that voice and are now paying the price (including the price your poor decision put on your family, and especially your son). But you heard the voice and your acknowledgment that it was there gives us great hope for you and your future. We have no doubts that when you get out from under the consequences of your actions, you will be a fine father and a fine son. It's rare for us to read a piece of such insight and honesty, and we are grateful to you for it!

I let my loved ones down and brought shame to my family. I left my son without a father and without hope, and for what?

Who Cares?

Who cares?
If you get into trouble and don't learn from your mistakes,
because the government don't
they just sees a future for you locked up.
Who cares?
If schools are being shut down and the government uses the school money
to build the devils house.
Who cares?
If young teens run the streets and bullets fly around and kills somebody's child.
The governor doesn't because to them it's just another body off his streets.
Who cares?
If teens have a place to stay
no one does
they could be stuck in the cold streets with no money in their pocket and no food to eat. No one does 'cause we live in a cold world.
So who cares?

-Nuckles, Alameda

From The Beat: There are many people who care, but sometimes it isn't visible to those who are in the need of care. They tend to turn a cold shoulder and not realize that somebody does really care for you. You bring a smile to someone out there, and they care about you.

I Feel Like A Bad Brother

This is my story about my life, this is how it goes: me and my brother are twins and we both came to juvenile hall.

I used my brother's name and I had a warrant. My brother came in here and when he went to court, the judge called me down to the court room. My mom was down there too and my brother was crying. So when they called me and my brother into the court room, I just told the judge that I was under my brother's name and told him my real name. He said that my brother was going to camp. My brother was happy a little, but he was still mad at me. I told him that I loved him and "I am sorry for using your name and I will never use it again".

I don't know why I used my brother's name after all the things he has done for me. He is the only person I got and he is my blood brother. He loves me to death. He would never do anything like this to me. Now after this, I feel like a bad brother, now that I think about it.

-Lil' Donavan, Alameda

From The Beat: Don't beat yourself up. Yes, you made a very serious mistake. Because you wanted so desperately to avoid punishment, you stole your brother's identity. But it took courage when you told the judge the real deal. And when you told your brother you loved him and promised never to do this again, he forgave you. One of the most important things we can do in life is to accept responsibility for our actions. You took the first step, and you won't be a bad brother or a bad person if you continue to take responsibility in your life.

I Don't Know Who Cares

Besides my family I really don't know who cares.

My girlfriend? Maybe, she's a fake, she says she does, but so did every one else.

My dad said he cared, but then he killed himself, so did he really care? He left my world with a quick goodbye, so I will never know.

My mom and my sister say they care, but there's constant fighting.

How do I prove who really cares and who's a fake? I guess I never will.

-Codi, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: There are times that we may never know who truly cares, but there is one thing that you do know. Your family cares and that's what should matter. In the last piece you did on your father, again, we at The Beat would like to say how sorry we are for your loss. Losing a father is not an easy thing to go through alone. This is not the first time you have mentioned your father, would it be unfair for us to ask you to speak to a trusting counselor? It may help with the loss you have suffered, and know this, you may feel that it was your fault or maybe you could have done something to change what happened? Don't feel this way; what your father did was by his choice and his choice alone. You do have family that truly cares for you.

Much Love And Respect Beat

I ain't feeling any of the topics today because I don't have time. But yeah, this is my last week. I'm leaving. I just want to say thanks for coming and showing us love and what not. Reading The Beat helped me be more open minded and also helped me to see that I'm not the only one going through the things I go through.

But anyways, I'm sure to keep in touch on the outs. Much love and respect to all The Beat workers, and, for everyone locked - up don't let anyone hold you down. Live life to the fullest and do the time. Don't' let the time do you. All right, till next time, I'm out. Love, your girl…

-Noel, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thank you Noel. You're right – one of our reasons for making The Beat happen is to let you know you aren't alone. We hope you've learned good things and that we hear from you, but from the outs, next time.

I'm All WWF

What's up Beat? This is Damian and I am getting released tomorrow.

Today's topic is on TV. When I turn it on, I mostly look for what I am interested in, rather than movies on HBO or STARZ. I love TV. I couldn't live without it. Sometimes I know what time things are on, so I watch them.

My favorite show is WWF. It's that fake wrestling show on TV. That's been my dream since I was nine years old, and I'm turning 15 this year.

When I get out I'm going to finish school and my probation. When I finish, I'm going to Atlanta, Georgia to a wrestling school for three years and then go to WWF, Then have a good life and be the best like Bret Hart and Hulk Hogan. I know a lot of superstars. Even from the 1960's and 1970's. I'm a fanatic. That's what im going to do.

There is this one wrestler who passed away on June 25th. His name was Chris Benoit, it was all over the news. The newscast said that he killed his family and then himself. They're not sure yet what happened, but I do know much about him. He was a world heavy weight champion in 2004 at Wrestle Mania 20. He was a five time US Champion too. I can't remember the others though. He was one of my favorites. His moves were the "Crippler Crossface," "Diving Headbutt," and the "Sharpshooter" (which is Bret Hart's move).

That's it Beat. RIP Chris Benoit.

-Da'Mizzle, Alameda

From The Beat: We would love to hear more about wrestling and your love for it. Who told you about those famous wrestlers from the 1960s and 1970s? Have you ever gone to a wrestling event? Where do you see wrestling heading since the death of Benoit? What kind of wrestler do you see yourself becoming? What will it take to get into their school?

The "N" Word Makes Me Sick!

The "N" word is not cool!
The sound of it makes me sick
Disrespecting me like I'm still stuck in chains
and whips!
Please change yo' language, it's not what I bargained for
Me and my other brothers don't wanna hear it anymore.

-Chawail, San Francisco

From The Beat: We agree with you! Have you banished this word from your own vocabulary? Are there other words that you hear (or say) that you can imagine have the same effect on others?

Colors

Red an' blue, just colors like any other
But why are people tryin' to kill one another?
To me red an' blue is just an excuse for brothers to
shoot each other
Blue is the color of the sky, so for all you reds, you gone
fly an' try to fight the sky
No, red is the color of blood, so for all you blues, you
gone suck da blood out your flu
Red an' blue just colors like any other
But now a tower with so much power
People are cryin', dyin' over a color like any other
Will this go on forever, or will we find peace within each
other?

-Dre Dre, San Francisco

From the Beat: Isn't it strange what people will go to war over? We often wonder if one of the OGs told a youngster to fight anyone wearing green, if they would just follow blindly. We may never know that, but we do how many mothers are left in tears over something as stupid as a flag (whichever flag you claim). Maybe your words will cause someone to think. Thank you for that.

Who Cares?

Yeah, I have a couple of people who care. I didn't choose this topic for people to feel sorry for me. So, who cares?

The only people I think care are my baby's mama. She cries almost every time I'm on the phone with her. And her mom cares. She's trying to take custody of me.

My mom doesn't. She's supposed to be getting it together so she can get me out of here.

I don't expect anybody to feel sorry for me. I'm just expressing how I feel. I still don't know what to do about it, either.

My pregnant girlfriend is at home worrying about what's going to happen to me, and I'm worrying about how I can be a good father when I'm locked up for a 777. (That means 'for protection')

My mom is having her own problems right now. So I'm pretty much F'd at this point. I will go to the Bill Wilson Center in two months. Then I'll be able to help with the family I'm starting. So maybe it's not as bad as it seems. I'm just not sure what I should do, but I have some ideas.

-Mac, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Yes, you've got your hands full. But it sounds like your girl's family has its arms open to you. No one knows how to be a dad until the time comes. But you do know some things you must do to prepare. Get your degree. Find decent work. Be ready to work hard and provide the kind of home that your child deserves. Let love lead the way. And it sounds like there's a lot of love in your girl's family. So, maybe things are looking better than you can now imagine.

A Sad One

The story I have to tell is a sad one. It involves my dad and myself.

My dad and I use to have an amazing relationship, but over the years our relationship deteriorated.

It all began when I turned fifteen, I started dating this guy, Ryan, and he didn't like him so we started fighting. Ryan use to beat me up a lot, and my dad beat me up because I was sneaking out and ditching school, and Ryan beat me up because I wouldn't ditch class and sneak out. So either way I always sneaked out I got beat up, and if I don't sneak out I got beat up.

In the end I'm the one who got sent to a different school.

We were okay until my senior year in high school where I meet Matt.

It was two months after I turned seventeen, and I ran away with him. I was on the run for three weeks then they found me and my dad beat me up so bad that he broke my ribs and cut off all my hair.

I was on the run for six months then I got arrested. They saw me for the first time in six months and our relationship was still bad.

-Amanda, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear this. No parent should hit their child the way you were hit/beat. Perhaps with time and counseling you and your father could have the same relationship you once had? It's also not worth staying in a relationship if you are getting beat up, no matter what that person tells you. Once they beat you they will always beat you even if they say they are sorry, they love you, and will never do it again, this is a proven fact. Get out of the abusive relationship because it will never end. And sadly if your dad can't control himself, maybe it is best to stay away from him and have a different kind of relationship. We're sorry. Hope life gets better. Do your part!

Who Cares?

Who cares? The judge doesn't care about you. They just want to send you away. They don't know what you feel. The judge just says 'guilty', or 'not guilty', and that's it. Also, he just wants to lock us all up to keep the streets safe. But that's not true. Also, who cares about what we think? They don't. They just want us to do time and rot. It's also so stressful that I can't see my family. But who cares? They don't. You're like a number. Who cares.

-Andres, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Andres, there is no "they". It's true that there is a 'system', and that too often the system appears to operate like a beast without a heart. But the system is composed of many individuals. Some of those individuals may be as you've described – folks who'd as soon lock you up and throw away the keys, but there are many fine people in the system, people who want justice done, who want everyone to get a fair shake. If you treat everyone you meet with respect, and do not operate on the assumption that everyone in the system is out to get you, you greatly increase the chances of being treated with the respect you deserve. And do not forget that most of the folks who find themselves in your situation have in fact made some iffy choices and that many have actually committed crimes. We do not know about your case. We know you deserve respect and that you deserve to be treated fairly. But the chances of that happening improve if you treat others the way you want them to treat you. Finally, let us say this: we care. We care a lot. It's why we make The Beat Within happen. We do it to provide incarcerated youngsters a voice, a platform to speak out. And we thank you for sharing your thoughts with us and all Beat readers.

I Ain't Mexican!

If I could put a word to sleep it would be what they call Latin people, because they always say to me "hey Mexican", and I ain't Mexican. I am Catracho, that's what the people from my country is called. I am from Honduras, it's by El Salvador, so I hate when they call me Mexican or amigo. Like me, I don't like to say ninja. I always call my friends, no matter what color, friends, homeboys or patnas. So if you see a Latin person walking and you want to ask them something and you don't know their name, just run up and pat them on the back and say hey, but don't tell them "amigo" or "hey Mexicans" 'cause they could go bad.

-Bones, Alameda

From The Beat: We shouldn't make assumptions about where somebody is from or what their ancestry is. It's cool that you are proud of your Honduran heritage but also treat your friends of all colors and nationalities with respect. We wish everyone would follow your advice!

Words Hurt

I would put the word "wet-back" or "border hopper" to sleep because these words are like the "N" word. It puts Latino people down, and Black people don't like it when they use that word to them 'cause it offends them. And they think it's funny when they say those words to us. I don't like that. I don't think that is funny.

-Green Combo, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't think it's funny either. But it is interesting that some people can object to words that hurt them, but turn around and use words that are just as ugly and offensive to others. Do you ever use the "B" word, for example, to describe females? That's something to think about. We wish all these words would get put to rest.

Put It To Sleep

What's up Beat? This is Yung Na-Na. I'm writin' tonight about me putting the game to sleep. I'm tryin' to put the game to sleep at a young age. I'm gone keep it real... I ain't tryin' to change, yet I'm gone wrap up the game and then get out, because I got a baby on the way. I ain't tryin' to change. It ain't gone work. I probably get mirked. That's why I'm gone put the game to sleep and then get out.

-Yung Na-Na U2

From The Beat: Why is it so difficult to commit yourself to change? It seems to us that if you follow through on what you've written here, you will definitely change — and that's a very good thing. Don't be afraid of change. It happens to everyone. The only question is, will you be in control of the changes that are coming, or will you allow others to control those changes? From this, it seems clear that you want get control of your life. That's the kind of change we give high props to.

Letting Down Those That Care

The three people that I know that care, my mother, my grandma, and my dad. By me being in here, I know I let them down big time and it hurts me every day to know that I let them down. My mother and grandma is no longer with me, so I think about them all the time.

-Darrin, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're very sorry about your mom and grandma. But we're equally encouraged that you know how much your own actions have let down those who have stood by you and who care for you. Now it's time to show them how much you care for them by sacrificing a few of the things you like doing in order to be able to give them what they want most — you!

Da Girl Of My Dreams

Time and time again
I wish I had a girl
But not just any
The woman of my world
To have issues wit'
Love and respect
To always be together
And probably have a kid
She has to be smart
With her own style
Must be beautiful
With a great smile
Sometimes problematic
But that's okay
'Cause we deal with things
In our own way
I'm lookin' for da one
To spend my life wit'
And one day
I wish to have dat girl

-Halo, San Francisco

From The Beat: One thing for sure, Halo — you'll never find that girl in a locked room full of boys! So get yourself out and keep yourself out! We love your sensitivity and gentleness, and we know that the girl of your dreams is out there (not in here) waiting for you to move to the next level.

Put It To Sleep!

I would like to put the word JJC to sleep. When I hear the word JJC it reminds me of the time I was in juvenile. I'm in juvenile now and I miss the streets. The word JJC reminds me of slamming doors and nasty food. JJC reminds me of a small room that you can't come in and out until the staff says so.

I hate JJC 'cause there's no family or friends. The room has two small windows. I like to eat, come and go when I want, so JJC is not the place for me. When I'm in JJC, all I think about is I would not be here if I wouldn't make the mistakes. I hope I'm not going to be in here for that long. I have court tomorrow so we're going to see how it goes.

When I get out, I'm going to do good for I won't have to come back to JJC. So when I get out, y'all ain't never gone see me again, and that's a promise.

-Jay G, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't blame you for having all these negative feelings for this place. It's not designed to make you feel fine... But the thing we like most about this piece is that you see and acknowledge the connection between "the mistakes" you've made, and losing your freedom. That means you know what you have to stop doing in order to stop coming here. We appreciate your "promise" never to come back, but we have to warn you that we've seen that promise made before by boys who end up forgetting, once they're out and able to make choices again. Don't be one of those! We don't mind seeing you again... but not here!

Hopes Up, Hopes Down

Yeah, yeah. what it do? Just came from court and just heard what I had needed to hear: "Yes, I grant the right to release."

Man, I screamed so loud inside but couldn't outburst 'cause my lawyer told me to sit up and look the judge in the eye. But I didn't care. I was happy as hell. This big ugly bailiff dude telling me to go in the holding cell. I got up with pride and stepped in there waiting for that big ugly dude to take me back to my unit to sign the hell out.

Talking to my lawyer and he telling me I got to stay here until my probation officer approve. I'm like, "What the hell?" 'cause see, my probation officer is a true jerk and I know she keep me in here as long as she can. Man, wow, my hopes up and then down.

-P-Nuty, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope by now that your PO has given her approval for you to be released. But be careful in how you relate to her, because POs are people too, so they respond to what they get. Just like your lawyer told you to sit up and look the judge in the eye (and you were able to keep that scream of triumph inside you), you can do the same with your PO. She may truly be what you describe, but she can still respond to respect with respect. Good luck!

Difference Between A Friend And A Homie

A homie would give you a $50 wop and tell you to make your money
A friend would help you try to find a job
A homie would go with you and rush enemy lines and won't let you behind
A friend would go with you to the movies or a theme park.
A homie would invite you to go drink, smoke, and party with some homies
A friend would invite you to go party with some females
A homie would let you borrow the hammer to do that dirt
A friend would let you borrow his Nintendo or something
A homie would give you that tough homie love
A friend would give you the same.
For me I don't call friends "friends." I called them associations, and I call homies "homies."
For all da homeboys and homegirls, keep y'all chin up. Keep it gangstah and stay sucka free.

-Big Oso, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're not sure how the list of differences between homies and friends goes with that last bit of advice to "keep it gangstah..." It seemed like you were leading us somewhere, and then you went off in the opposite direction. We love the distinctions you make, but it only leads us to ask the obvious question: Are you a homie or a friend?

Mama Care

One thing I know is my mama care a lot. If not, she wouldn't be there for me. My lil' bra Na-Na cares 'cause he always got my back when I need him. That show me he care. Most of ma goons don't care 'cause they not here when I'm down.

When I look around, all I got is ma moms and Na-Na. That's who cares, my family, not my boys. Just my fam and CJ.

Well Beat, I'm out.

-Mookey, San Francisco

From The Beat: It sounds like you're learning something very valuable, and that's who really matters in your life. So our question to you is, how will you show those who truly love you that you truly love them, too? You are the gift they want, home and safe. Is that a gift you can give them?

Put It To Sleep

"Bitch," do you know how dangerous that one word can be? Not only for females but for males also. The word can lead to any and everything you can imagine. When you think about saying the "B" word, think about violence. Think about pain, hatred, fighting or death.

Yeah, I know some chickens (dumb females). I call them chickens because most of them are young minded. If not young minded then they just cluckin' for sex. I know they might call each other the capital "B" for fun and games, but soon as a hitta (male) call them one, it's a problem. Shhh, it done got to the point where hittas is callin' they hits "B" and laughing about it.

I ain't gone lie. Me and my folks got into the habit of callin' each other "Bs." I ain't with that shhh like that. Think about what's it gone turn into when a hitta say it and you ain't feeling the playing and shhh at the time, then you know what it is.

So basically I'm saying think about how you would react to the word if it was towards you, your sister, or your moms? I know me, and you know you. We both know we a be on the first hitta ass say some shhh like that to the women in your fam. So what I'm saying is put it to bed and watch ya tongue.

-P. Crooks, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think you've explained well why the "B" word is so inappropriate, and why none of us would allow anyone to call our own mothers or sisters or wives that word. But then you go on to use the word "Chicken" to describe other females. How is that any better? Can you put yourself in the shoes of one of the girls you refer to that way and imagine what it might feel like?

It's Necessary To Live Life

Necessary I'm inspired by the streets and game
No opinions so I live my life as a young lame
Reaching the top of the jail tragedy list
My consequences got me living a life of lonely miss
I had a chance to stand high against any stress
But my defense expense a highly life of depress
Now I reach into my brain an' study my untrusted thoughts
And all my unspoken frustration is all my fault
Guilty of being a stranger to myself in life
And right now my mistakes got me paying a stronger price
But it's me who was unloyal to my goals
I want to stand on the community without no clothes
Purchase a package I really didn't need
So my future is on hold stopping my succeed
The department of crime is post on my head
And that department is where I established in lead
I got my head on right an' now focus to live my advantage
Do right like the rest of the young average
Instead of walking a dead line of scandalous and a savage
This life to you is what you make it to
Just be a man an' do what you say you gonna do
It's necessary...

-Lil' Papa, Alameda

From The Beat: It is so clear that you are in that tortured state of mind that keeps saying, "If only..." when you know that there are no "if onlies..." We hope that your situation — and your thinking and writing about it — will serve to teach others who haven't yet found themselves in the tight situation you now find yourself in. If you can keep another youngster from a "stupid mistake" that lasts forever, then you will be doing a great service. We're interested in what you find when you "study (your) untrusted thoughts." Can you explain more about that?

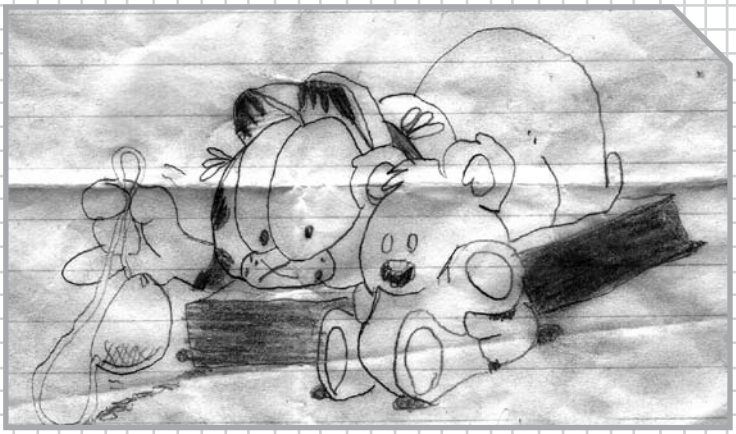
Who Cares? Who Cares?

Was up wit' The Beat? But Man, I was thinking like, who do care? I don't know. I think my fam care. It think my lady care. But really, you never know who care for real. 'Cause you can think somebody care about you. But the only way you gone know for real is that they gotta show you. Having somebody care about you really means a lot for real.

But you also gotta care about yo'self, feel me, 'cause if you don't you gone end up somewhere you don't wanna be, feel me.

-Hot-Rod, San Francisco

From The Beat: Oh yeah, Hot-Rod, we definitely feel you! You're absolutely right, the only way you know if someone really cares is by their actions. So tell us, what are you doing to show that you truly care for yourself?



The Word I Would Put To Sleep

Hey, what's crackin' Beat? Well, it's Troubles. Anyways on tonight's topic, I would put the word "bitch" to sleep. The reason I would pout that word to sleep is because it is very disrespectful toward any females. I also take it very disrespectful when someone calls me the B word.

People call females that word and they don't even take it into consideration that they have a mother and other female relatives. Well Beat, that's all I have for you today, so till next time much love and respect to all.

Well, this abstract minded vato is out.

-Troubles

From The Beat: We also hate this word. Males who would never permit this word to be used to describe themselves feel free to use it to describe females, thus disrespecting their own mothers who brought them into this world! Have you ever used the word yourself, or have you ever used other disrespectful words (hate words) against any individual or group? And finally, did you mean to call yourself an "abstract minded vato" or an "absent minded vato"?

The "B" Word

I put the B word to sleep just before I got in here. I was used to saying the word because of the people that I had hung around (especially my sisters). I mean, I liked saying the word just to act funny or to show off, but now I'm tired of it. If a girl calls me a B, I get really mad. Plus if a guy calls you it (even if he is your "man" or not) then I would be ready to leave. FAST! Some people play with the word like I use to, but it's no point.

A few months before I got locked up (7/2/07) instead of using the word B, I would just tell them that they is an unstable creature and that's real.

-Cobbra, Alameda

From The Beat: It's good to stop using negative words in ones life. Realizing that all the senseless things we say are idiotic makes us look at everything from a different perspective.

Who Cares...?

At one point or another I did care about people or the decisions I was making. After a few people around me died I got mad at every little thing.

I'm a happy guy but I wasn't happy during those times. I didn't care for my life or any else at that. I got involved with a few people who showed me how to make money. I know this wasn't the right thing to be doing but it was a choice I made. I started stacking and I got myself a bank account and had saved up for a car of my liking.

At this point I wasn't going to school and I was half-heartedly going home. Then I got locked up an I wasn't really trippin'. I knew it was coming and I had the mind set that I was just going to be in for a couple of weeks and I would be back out in the street.

Well now it's been three months and the people I got locked up with are out. It's been a minute and I still haven't got any love from my ninjas on the out. All being locked up did was show me who I couldn't trust.

You would think I'll be cool 'cause I got a couple of G's waiting for me, but no, my mom had to use that to get me a lawyer. In the end the only one who cared about me was the one that was there the whole time.

-Yong Son, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Do you think your loved ones that moved on would be happy to see you the way you are right now? You should be doing positive things to keep their memories alive and well. Realizing that your friends are nothing to you is a start, now once you are released are you going back to the block and grind? Or are you going to stay home or work and be a legit citizen?

One Word

One word that I would like to see put to rest is the word "bitch"! I say that because, even though I myself use the word, I think that it is a disrespectful, degrading word that should not be used when referring to a female.

I believe that people use the word way too loosely, and should think about if they would want their mother or sister to be called one. I think that any sane female would agree with me. Then again I hear a lot of females refer to each other as bitch, yet when a man calls them one they find it disrespectful. That does not make sense to me.

I think that both men and women should bury that word. It cannot just be a one sided thing. Women cannot just expect men to stop calling them bitches when we hear them call themselves that! On that note, let's all put to rest the word bitch.

-Jamar, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The contradictions surrounding the use of bad language are so interesting. But we like your call for all of us to take this pledge together. Do you have a suggestion of a different word to use when some female is acting shady?

Who Really Cares?

Q-vole beater? First off, I'd like to send my love and respect as always. I hope this finds my peers in the best of conditions.

Once again it's Lil' L from Gilroy. Those who know me know wus up. I'm headed to CYA any day now. I'm a lil' stressed, but I'm a G so I'll make it. Anyway let's get to The Beat.

Often we ask ourselves who really cares. Well at least I do. See, I've been down so long I've lost my ties with almost all my loved ones. I guess you could say they lost all hope in me. I get letters here and there, with all that, "I love you and care," but for real who really cares?

No one knows how I feel late at night when I can't go to sleep. I be thinking 'bout all my crazy ways. Damn! For a minute I was off the hook. LOL. I'm loved by few, hated by many, if you know what I mean. Now I'm at somewhat of a turning point. This time could either make me or break me. I don't want to be another sad story — life in prison or dead. Still I'm not ready to slow down. If I don't, maybe it will take the pen to tame me. Well until next time much love and respect. Stay up G's.

-Lil' L, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We admire the honesty of this piece — though, of course, we wish you were at that point where you were ready to slow down because we know that just not wanting to be "another sad story" won't keep it from happening. We'd like to refer you to the BWO in the back by Dwight Abbott who grew up in the CYA and spent the next 46 years of his life in prison where he remains today, and where he'll die. A young man in the LA County Juvenile Hall read his book, "I Cried, You Didn't Listen" and wrote him a letter, which Dwight has answered in great detail. We have published both the boy's letter and Dwight's response, and we think you might gain some knowledge about what lies ahead if you take the time to read it. Only you can decide whether to take the advice he offers to heart, but we know him to be a man who cares deeply about the young men (like you) who seem so determined to follow him into prison — and who is doing all he can (from where he is) to keep that from happening.

My Responsibility

Hey Beat, what's up? It's me, Chino. I've been locked up in here for a cool minute now, and a lot of stuff has been on my mind.

First off, I came in here looking just to finish my time cool and get out without catching any cases. But recently, more than before, a lot of new cats have come in and basically screwed our unit up. But since these new cats have come in, they've been acting really childish and doing stupid stuff like yelling at night and talking when we're on quiet, resulting in us losing a lot of time.

Now I'm trying to get out clean but I feel like it's my responsibility to check them and tell them to shut up. But I know if I do, something's gonna pop off and I'll probably get more time. I just think it's messed up that some irresponsible people screw up everybody else's time for some stupid ass stuff.

-Chino, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We love the honesty and sense of community here. Isn't it interesting how just one belligerent person at a party of 100 people can shut the whole thing down? It's the same way in your unit – but being a leader means stepping up and helping to manage things. We think that you could do this without things "popping off." Your responsibility is to figure out how to do that.

I can't stand it in here....I think I'm going to scream. I'm not trying to say I'm perfect, but I have faith that one day I will almost get there.

Juvenile Hall

I don't want to write about any of the topics so I'm going to write about the hell I've been living in Juvenile Hall.

I guess it's not as bad as it seems, right? Wrong! It's worse than what it seems. I can't stand being around all these negative females. Who don't want to do anything with their lives except what they've been doing. Prostitutes going back to their pimps or on the track. Drug dealers going back to their block. Runaways....that keep running away.

I can't stand it in here....I think I'm going to scream. I'm not trying to say I'm perfect, but I have faith that one day I will almost get there. I have faith that I will become a doctor and have a faithful, loving husband who will only be with me and kids that I don't have to worry about popping off at the mouth because I raised them well. Everything will be swell. But until that day comes I'm still living in hell.

-Tiara, Alameda

From The Beat: Have you thought about trying to talk to the other females about changing their ways or helping them get into programs that could help them change their ways? Since you don't like the fact that they're doing all this negative stuff, why don't you help them out? Or, simply stay focus on you and work on getting out of place that bothers you so much. What must you do to stay out?

Night-Night Hate

I've always not liked the word hate. Hate is a non-suitable word to refer to anybody you don't like. Whatever happened to the word dislike? Is that dead too! Hate is like saying I'm going to do something to you so that you will not exist in my life or so that I cannot see your face. Hate can kill so many dreams people have for themselves. When you have somebody say "they hate you" for their reason it hurts and most of the time kills what that person is going to do for their life. See me, I prefer the word dislike or "I just don't like you." So by saying that it won't do much of a hurt to a person as it would if you would say "I hate you."

So I encourage people to start to say "I don't like you," and put the killing word "HATE" to rest for a long time. Stay up put this in your brain and leave hate alone. Bye bye!!

-Kk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You know, we never really thought about what a horrible word and feeling the word you mention here – which we too have decided to no longer use – creates in the world. We think you've got the right idea! We'll tell everyone to stop using it too. We'll start a new national trend.

Destiny

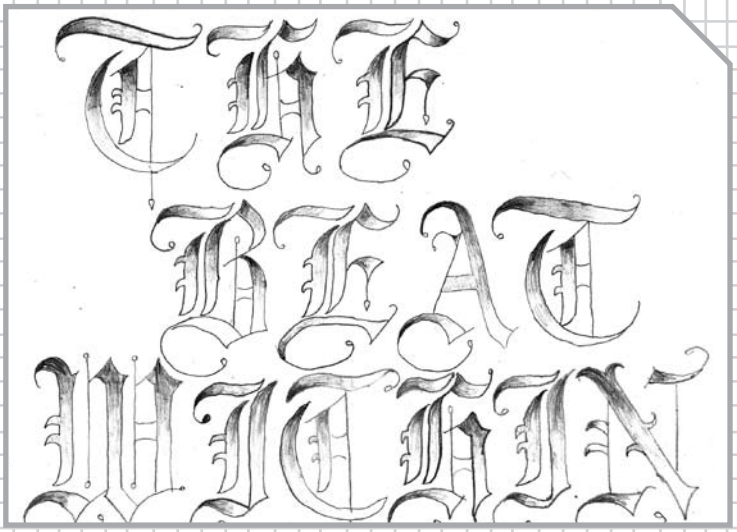
I don't believe in destiny,
Life is what you make it,
Kiss it sweetly fully dressed,
Or have sex with her naked,

If you choose to go in raw,
You're subject to the outcome,
Live with what you come out with,
And don't ask her how come,

It's gritty but it's city life,
What we've been born into,
You'll never catch me hurting,
Only bleeding from this pencil.

-J Ban. San Francisco

From The Beat: You might just as well have named this piece, "Consequences," because that is exactly what you're talking about. Whether you grew up in gritty circumstances or not, every choice we make (and every choice we don't make) carries consequences. As you say, "You're subject to the outcome." So, what choices are you planning for your future to give yourself a better outcome than this?



To Say Goodbye

Hardest thing you can do in life
Say bye to someone
From the life-giving sun
To God's daughters an' sons
Life comes and goes
You think you' killing your foes
Running from the 5.0s
The foes has family
Friends, who going to be lonely
Or even killing for the money
It's hard for them to let go
To say, "Bye," to that someone
Your homies move far away, too
No more time with them to have fun
They be outta your life forever
Like those people in Katrina
'Cause of a lever
Goodbye and RIP

-Bufu Jr.

From The Beat: It is sad and even tragic when someone you love leaves your life, no matter what the reason is. You don't write whose leaving has inspired your wonderful poem, but you sure give great advice to even those who consider killing their enemies, because their enemies' families would suffer terribly at the loss of their young sons (and daughters.)

Proud Family

What's up Beat? I like watchin' "The Proud Family" when I'm high because that be so funny, but I like watchin' BET because I like music.

This my first time and I been here for three months, for 211 and grand theft. I go to court soon. They supposed to let me out on EM. At first they was tryin' to send me to camp or a group home.

When I get out if they let me out on EM I'm gon' pimp that so I can get it over with, so I can leave the house anytime I want and when I leave the hall I'm go stay on the positive side, so I won't come back because this is not the place to be. When summer is over I'm gonna go to school everyday so I can someday go to college and get a diploma and try to get into the NFL or the NBA so I can get rich and take care of my mom and sister for takin care of me while my father wasn't there. I love my mom and sister for that and I apologize for not following your rules I love family.

-Lil' Rich

From The Beat: Good for you Lil' Rich for this very positive piece. We do hope yo ucan stay on the positive side too, and we agree with you that getting back into school is an excellent start. Also your desire to play sports is great too. As for getting into the pros, well, it's not going to be easy, if anything you should simply enjoy playing high school ball, maintaining a solid grade point average and see what happens? Keep us posted, and remember college is not out of the question at all!

Longing For Home

I wish I was at home
So I can eat, sleep,
shower, and talk when
I want to. I hate taking
showers wit' other guys
next to me. And I hate
strip searches. I need to
stop doing people wrong
and start listening to
my mom. Clean my
room and stay off
her house phone all
night long.

-Erin

From The Beat: OK, we know what you dislike and we know what you are longing for, so can you do what you need to do to stay out? Choice is yours!

Missing My Mom

I miss my mom so much. I wish I was in my mommy's arm and she tucking me in at night with my teddy bear named Ted.

My mom has done so much and I haven't realized it.

I stole cars, I smoked, I drank, while I hanged out with the wrong people, as I snuck out at night. All these things my mom had to put up with and she is still taking care of me. I can not believe she is still putting up with all the stuff I have done and she is still nice about it until now, when she decided to put me in a group home, and that I don't like.

I've been here for two months straight, with no visits. I am so mad because my mom has not come to visit me.

-Isiah

From The Beat: How sincere are you about getting back home and doing good? What will it take for you to avoid the traps? You know the traps, so we suggest you remain honest and true to you, and your mom and in the end all will be happy and you will remain free of this painful incarceration ride.

The Truth

Sitting here with dead time
Looking for someone to give a piece of my mind
Never again am I coming to a facility of justice of crime
But to say the truth, I know I'm lying
"Mijo try to change." my mamma always says
People always tell me I'ma end up in jail or dead.
People can't change if they don't want to
Because when they get out they gonna do what they want to
I really don't know how my life gonna end up
Don't wanna end up like my dad half of my life locked up.
But what happens happens, that's the truth from me to you.
But I'ma always keep my eyes open, 'cause momma didn't raise no fool.

-Big Boi

From The Beat: You're right, no one changes unless they want to, and thank you for not lying: The best poems always come from the truest part of ourselves. But in your true self you sound conflicted, like a part of you wants to change, a part of you doesn't, a part of you seems like you don't even believe you can control it. What happens happens, like you say, but a lot of it is because we make it happen. We make a decision. Have you made yours?

Straight Life

When I get out of jail, I plan on getting my life straight. No more hangin' out on the streets and no more getting high with my homeboys. So when I get out I plan on going to school and getting a job. I plan on getting into boxing classes and football too, 'cause there's nothing on these streets, but ninjas on drugs tryin' to pull you down. That's what the white man want you to do.

-Young Kb

From the Beat: What "white man" wants you on drugs? What "white man" wants to see you get pulled down? We know plenty of people, bt we do not know the person you speak about. Give us more details! As for you changing your ways, excellent choice, we are pulling for you!

I turned on the TV To Find A Good Movie

When I turn on the TV I look for a good movie or something like that. I don't see people from the bay videos on there, just famous people like FAB or something, but besides that I do see peeps on the news, another brother got lit up quick and killed.

Sometimes I'm glad I'm in here 'cause I ain't tryin' to get hit up with a magnum 357 halo tip. I do get down and I go skitz but I aint tryin' to die early. Off tops, gone.

-Lil' Twone

From The Beat: No one wants to be remember as the guy that got lit up and killed. What can you do to live a long productive life? How serious are you about staying away from negativity? As for telelvison, tell us about a good movie you have seen? Also tell us who needs more video exposure from the bay?

Hundreds Of Channels

When I watch television I have hundreds of channels to flip through, but I only use certain ones like the ones I like to watch. The one I like to watch is Cartoon Network. I basically watch all the cartoon channels because they are funny and they're the only ones that are not boring on TV, besides HBO or wrestling.

The kind of cartoons I like are "Futurama" and "Robot Chicken." I like them because they are the funniest shows on television.

-Derrick

From The Beat: What makes "Futurama" and "Robot Chicken" so funny? What cartoon will you not watch?

It's Racist At Times

I think the "n word" is a racist word but can be used only if you are black. So in a way, we can be racist, but it's the way the word is pronounced or spelled. Like, you could walk up to your friend -he's black and you're black- and you could say "what's up my ninja?" or if there's an group of your friends, you could say "what's up my ninjas?" or "hey what yo' ninja's doin'?" But most racist people would say it as an insult or to put you down, like "you stupid ninja" or "negro" and I think it makes a big difference. It matters because a white person can say, "what's up ninja?" and it won't offend most or they could say, "what's up ninja?" and you would get offended.

-Robert

From The Beat: This is an interesting perspective. Please keep in mind that we don't use the n-word in The Beat, so we changed your examples to "ninja." Hopefully we still illustrated your point. So, if we understand you correctly, the meaning of the word depends both on how the word is pronounced and who is saying it. At the end you write that you think it would be ok for a white person to say "what's up, ninja"? As long as he or she pronounced it without the "r" at the end. Really? The word has so much potential to be hurtful.

Thoughts On Love

The word I want to talk about is love. Love has its ups and downs, but mostly its downs. Love gets a lot of people in trouble. One thing love does cause is trouble. It can lead to a happy ending, but for the most part that I heard about it causing trouble. It's easer to love then hate, but most people don't got that mentality. It always end up in a troublesome or tragic way. That's why I want to put away the L word, love.

-No love

From The Beat: This week we asked our writers which word they might like to bury, and why. It's true that love can lead to heartbreak and even acts of violence, due to jealousy or possessive feelings (towards a person, a hood, or maybe even an idea), but maybe as you get older you might experience love in a different way that doesn't lead to tragedy or trouble. We hope so! It's worth it.

Keep Yo' Head Up

To all my ninjas that's locked up right now keep yo' head up! Remember they ain't gone keep you forever! I'm still up here at camp holdin' it down, and if I could do it, anybody can. Don't run from no group home, or camp placement either. They tryin' to wash ninjas for doing that shhh. So keep doing what you do -- don't change for shhh!

-Dedo

From The Beat: You don't need to change yourself or your heart – just your activities. Because after you turn 18, they CAN keep you down forever, and a spirit like yours deserves to stay up, and free!

Who Cares?

I do and don't, 'cause I don't care if I go to juvenile, and what my family and friends think, but sometimes I wonder if the judge care or the staff that work in camp or the hall.

It really don't matter if they do or don't cause after the week or month they get they check and go about they way giving instructions.

If you cared and I cared we both wouldn't be reading the Beat.

-Elisi

From The Beat: This is some deep (and dark) thinking. Tell us this: What do you think keeps young people from "caring." Because you're right, you've been treating your own life carelessly, which is a trip, because when you think about it, isn't life pretty much the most valuable thing you've got?

Thoughts on the "n word"

I don't think the N word should be put to sleep because that's like taking something away from blacks. The rappers love using it for their rap music and movies, so it would be wrong. They should just leave it alone. Think of all the complaints that will be made through the community and it will feel like we're not black. I keep using the "n" word forever so ain't nothing stoppin' me from using that word, strait up, yo'.

-Pro N Word

From The Beat: Sorry we couldn't print a couple of sentences towards the end because we couldn't read your handwriting. A lot of people agree with you, and we're not saying there is a right or wrong answer. Do you think rappers use the "n word" word in their music and movies to keep it real, or to make money? Or maybe both? If people of other races buy that music or go see the rapper's movie that uses the "n word", are they racist? Or are they just buying a product, which in turn gives the rapper profit? Does it matter?

My Cell Window

Looking at life through my window
I'm hungry, I wanna eat
Gotta wait till they say I can, though.
Through my cell window
I see him going to a group home
And him going to the Y
Stupid ass actions, but now he wonder why
Mom and pop hella juiced in visiting.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: In your poem, we don't know if you are the one observing or if you are the one being observed, which is an interesting idea that can be found in lots of works of art. Also the idea of the cell as a window... Is it a window to the soul? To the future? Your poem makes us think through the snapshots of life you describe.

How Do You Get Your Money?

When I get out I'm planning on getting a job. I don't want to go back to my old ways. I don't like grinding because I always gotta watch my back and watch out for cops that's why I want to be legit and get legal money ...plus I don't want to worry my mom.

My mom worries, so I'm gonna do good.

-Question Mark Kenny

From The Beat: What kind of job would you want to look for? In a way, you could say that when you're young, your number one job should be learning what school has to teach you, and deciding on a next step after you graduate. Is that a job you would consider? And then you can work a little bit after school for pocket money. Would you do that?

Missing The Funeral

This is Lil' D writing from 150 (Alameda). I'm getting mad tho because I suppose to been got released last week and I'm still in here following and doing the same thing over again. When I could be doing something better, I'm in here stressing.

They took my bra out the game and I couldn't go to his funeral. I cried in my room, mad at the same time. Wishing I could make the enemy feel my pain. But God kept me in here for a reason. I don't know why. I'm still trying figure it out. He knew how close I was to bra. I did a lot of dirt with him. Now I just got memories to cheer me up.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: We know that you want to honor your bra's memory and find peace after his death, but you have to understand that taking revenge will only keep this cycle of violence going. It will result in the deaths of people you care for, and it could land you in prison or dead. It won't bring you peace or bring your bra back. If you don't believe us, talk to someone who's doing time for a revenge murder or gang hit, or read the wisdom in the pages of The Beat Without. Maybe your bra, and others whom you have lost, would want you to take care of yourself and live your life as a free man. What do you think?

Who Cares

Who cares? Shhh let me think, my mama cares about me.
I don't think none of these staff really cares about me.
Maybe they do.
Sometimes I don't care about nothing.
Every time I get locked up I act like I care,
but when I'm on the outs it's different.
But now I think different
I care more because I don't want to be in another correctional facility.
I need to be on the outs getting money.
So who cares? I guess you can say I care and my family cares
but its' the stuff we care about that counts… see you later Beat.

-Question Mark Kenny

From The Beat: You ended on a cliff hanger –now we want to know more about what YOU care about. Your family, of course. And your future dreams – but what are those future dreams.

A Hella Cold and Wintry Tale

I remember this one time, I think in 2003. I went to Yuba Gap, this was my first time in the snow, so it was a new experience. We were walking in the parking lot and we had our sleds in our hands. I was thinking that since it was snowing it would be ice all over the parking lot.

`So, I started to run hella fast to see if I could slide on the sled across the whole parking lot. But as I jumped on the sled, it came to a dead stop, and I went flying off and scraped my knees, and hands up. And it hurt hella bad cuz my hands was frozen.

My friends was laughing at me and I left there feeling hella stupid.

-Jerrell

From The Beat: We feel you on this – there's not a lot more embarrassing than slipping on ice or snow, especially when there's pain added to it as well. If it helps any, you told the story great, so maybe it was worth it!

Turn Down The Heat

This heat is getting to my head
This weather feels dryer then county bread.
If I could I'll get some soda only a dollar
Drying up because global warmer I need water
The sun is getting messed up no lie
Why is it raining in the middle of July
Barely any clouds in the skies
Barely any shade to hide
The beauty of the arctic glaciers
Are now begging …cracked out like chaser
It's funny how gas prices is going up
But people still put 'cause in the ozone up
Water's coming down I share the fame
Too bad it burns I hate acid rain
What are humanity doing to themselves
They plan to cut down trees till there's none left.
I feel water running down my face
Cool winds need to come to my place
I bare the chill with no waste
I feel lazy today not like myself
The sun is too hot it's bad for my health
That and I need to get wet faces
I'm still hella dry from my weekend passes.

-Lucky

From The Beat: The earth is our home, and we disrespect it/when really it's our job to protect it/it's the home we pass on to the next generation/ so it's up to us to be its salvation…No time like now to start!

Put The B-Word to Sleep

One word I will put to sleep is the "B" word because nobody should be called that. I be hearing people call women the "B" word and some women don't like to be called that, and I be hearing man be calling each other that and some men don't like to be called that.

When people be called the "B"word, people end up fighting each other. And people get killed when people get called that, so that's why I think the "B" word should get put to sleep.

-Lil' Saint

From The Beat: It's true, it's like violence can start with the words and then spread to the bloodshed. If words of hate can start the violence, do you think it's possible that positive words can help stop it? What about words like honor, pride, brotherhood, respect?

Sleep away

If I could put a word to sleep it would be bitch. That's a bad word to be used especially to degrade women. I use it toward many people even though I don't mean it. People feel as if they've been disrespected. I've lost many friends over playing with that word. I've also hurt many young ladies that really like me. With that being said the word is gone from my vocabulary, matter of fact what word? See!

-Derrick

From The Beat: Any word that puts any one down should be put to rest. Sometimes words get used so much that everybody just throws them around with out no cause. That's how problems start and I'm glad that you are erasing one of those hurtful words from your vocabulary.

No Joke

While I was in Camp Sweeney, I hopped on the phone wit' this girl and she told me Phil caught three to the dome. I was like "watch yo' mouth and don't play with me."

She said she ain't playing he got killed. I don't see how it happened, but when I got the news, couldn't nobody tell me nothing. My brah! Man like be cool, but I didn't know how to take the whole thing, and now a few months flew by.

Phil I still can't believe you gone. I'll see you at the crossroads. It ain't gon' be that long. They say everybody gotta die someday.

-Tony

From The Beat: May your day come far-far in the distant future. Your life is a gift, and we hope you cherish it – for yourself, and for Phil too. He'd want to see you thrive.

Questions For The Beat

Hey what's up, Beat? How have you guys been? Well, this week I was thinking about the questions you guys ask us and the comments you guys say, so I wanted to change things up a little. I want to ask you some questions. So here goes: one, how does it feel to work with us when you leave the hall? At the end of the day when you're done, do you have us on your mind? What do you think about us?

These are some questions I wanted to ask you. Well I want to say what's up to al! Keep your head up.

-Yoyo

From The Beat: Hey, thanks! Well, to answer your first question, when we leave the hall we usually feel energized. We hope that you found the workshops to be thought-provoking, and we hope that we did a good job of facilitating discussion and helping people write their pieces. We go home to our families and hope and pray that all of you will have the opportunity to go home to your families some day soon. We think about our writers during the week and wish you well, knowing that you are young and have your whole lives ahead of you.

Relapse

I want to write about relapse because it's funny to me.

When I hit a lick it's a 50/50 chance I can go free or go to jail. This time I got caught because shhh didn't go right, and I knew what I was doing, so I got me right back where I was: In the hall, to camp.

I take risks because I did it a lot of times and got away, so I guess I do it over and over till I hit big of get caught because what goes around comes around. But just because I'm in camp doesn't mean I'm going to change I'm going to hitting licks but I can't stop mobbing. I'm going to make some legit dough so I won't end up back up in the system 'cause I'm bout to be 18.

-Lonnie

From The Beat: No one in Vegas would play 50/50 odds. Don't you think you should go for something with a lower risk, higher paypack? Especially now that you'll be 18 and the rules have changed!

Bury the "b word"

The "b word" because it makes people aggravated and it is a word that can cause a lot of danger, and that is sad. Yeah, the "b word" is a term to call somebody to put them down. The "b word" is a word to call a female when mad or just to call them that.

Callin' somebody a "b word" can make someone either hit you or even shoot you. The "b word" can cause people to die. Saying it to the wrong person can cause you or that person to get beat or even shot or stabbed, so I think that the "b word" shouldn't be said.

-Steve

From The Beat: It's true, people use the "b word" to put down women, and guys call each other the "b word" when they are gearing up for a fight. Oftentimes, things escalate into violence when somebody gets called the "b word", as you point out. Do you think you could walk away from a fight if someone called you that word? It really is an ugly word.

My Thoughts Of Juvenile Hall

Now I'm in the hall starring at the walls, playing with a tape ball.
I think how my family is taking it and when I mean it I mean having their only son locked up and taken from them over some stuff that I didn't do,
but as they say you do the crime you do the time.
Since I can't prove that I didn't do it they say I did the crime.
I've only been in juvenile hall for exactly one month today.
I have been in here since June 17th, now its July 17th.
But it's alright.
But back to my thoughts, I'm in my room trying to sleep but I can't
all I can do is think about my family and my cousin,
all I can do is think about how my cousin is lonely.
I think he's more lonely more than me,
I've thought of him as a big brother!

-Porkey

From The Beat: Juvenile hall isn't the place to be. How does your cousin feel about you being locked up? Do you tell him how it is in there so he won't get locked up in the future? Change your ways and join your family young man.

Deep Distance Appearances

Consumption of magic that knowledge around her lips
A distance appearances of her increased body of hips
Adaptive to my cautions got me standing guilt
Victory of a woman's heart of love is what I felt
Temperature is sky high just by a total pleasurable touch
Involved in every popular move got me and a bunch,
Beautiful as a angel that's surrounding over my head
Explorer my heart of life is what was said
Converged my attention only on you with a blush
Complete all my difficulties with a kiss of crush
Private attention by me on to your sexy prevent
Natural beauty without a make-up advent
Warm my lips with a adore rub
Success is complete my tradition with just a lil bit of love
Perhaps you are admired with a balance of trust
Capable of available love that's in my icebox
Condition love can sensitive against aggress
And deserve to be treated with love nothing more or less
Emergency rush to her eyes when I come around
Automatically romantically experienced no struggle sand
It's nothing but love...

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: You say "It's nothing but love..." But clearly, love is something worth keeping. The tragedy is that too many of us only realize that after it's lost! We think you probably already knew this before, which only proves again that knowledge is not always enough to keep us from doing stupid and self-destructive acts, unless it goes along with courage and a commitment to change. Keep writing!

Wondering How My Life Would Be With A Dad

What's up this is the homie from San Francisco, but now lives in Oakland. My name is Juan, but homies call me Lil' Frisco.

Growing up in Oakland isn't that much different than growing up in San Francisco. I still got homies on this side of the bay. I grew up with just a mom, no dad. My dad went to San Quentin when I was two years old. I never had no man to discipline me. I guess that's why I'm here.

Since I was 9 years old I've been kickin' it with the homies. Stealing bottles, robbing houses, stealing cars, stealing decks, and getting into fights.

I'm here because I got caught robbing a house. My PO said I'm going to do three months in the hall and going to camp for six months. I can't wait until I get out and go back to kicking it wit' the homies. When I get back out I'm not trying to get into that much trouble. I'm not going to be like my dad.

-Lil' Frisco

From The Beat: It must have been a hard long journey through your life as of far. Being without one of your parents is a difficult thing to live through. You can only wonder how life would be with a father, but you got to remain strong and overcome any obstacles. Do your mother proud and not follow your father's footsteps to prison.

A Cold and Wintry Tale

A cold and wintry tale, me and my ninjas get locked up wit no bail.
A cold and wintry tale, the system wants me to fail.
A cold and wintry tale, I sail to get my mail.
A cold and wintry tale, living my life as a felon.
A cold and wintry tale, hope them squares don't go telling.
A cold and wintry tale, I be out there thizzing.
A cold and wintry tale, to all my ninjas stand up.
A cold and wintry tale, to all my ninjas in jail stay up.

-Lil Suave

From The Beat: You know what's really cold – the way your mindset stays frozen in the same place. You keep saying the system wants you to fail, but what about you Suave? Aren't you setting your own self up to fail?

Eliminated Hate And Stereotype

My opinions is now eliminated by her sexy voice
Possible to vanish and be her lifetime choice
Definitely I'm the man for her to respect an' trust
And in our situation we're not in a mandatory rush
But need each other for a lot of reasons
That's love, trust, pleasure, courage through any rainy or sunny seasons
She always stood by my wings at all dangerous times
Even when I mistakenly done a unfashionable stupid crime
Track a lot of enemies 'cause our relationship too strong
Many hate on us but no matter what she still hold on
And I'm honored to have this special soul of life
This my lady that's in my arms motivation of my life
Cooperate in all sexy activities she request in my eyes
Too sweet to be real this isn't no cautions lie
Bring a man out of a boy but with love tears
Immediately eliminated all my unspoken fears
Complete my dreams in I reached my destiny
Still stereotype by the world's lost unbelieved fantasy
No matter this lady is riding on my side against all hate
As young love we already got a lot against our plate
Kiss me an' I'll kiss you back
If you lost then I'll follow your tracks
'Cause this woman belong to only me the young king of voice
Eliminated all hateries without no choice of source
I love…

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: You had all this right in your hands (and arms), and yet you gave it all up when you "mistakenly done a unfashionable stupid crime." How hard that must be to think about and deal with! Some "stupid mistakes" lead to a lifetime of consequences… Maybe some of our readers will be able to see where their choices might lead them, and make some changes.

Change

What's up Beat? Man, it's been a long time I haven't seen my family. I just hope that one of these days I get to go home to be with them.

Where I am at right now it's not a good place to be. Why? Because you don't have nothing to do in here but listen to them (the counselors) and you don't want that.

I just want to be free and change my life around. I know I am better than this, it's just that someone did a crime and I took the blame because I was there.

Right now I just want to tell y'all that pray for me everyone that is in jail. Hope that they will get better in life.

When I get out I might want to play basketball that's if I have time, if I don't I will do my best to get a great job that will help me and my family. I don't want to live this life no more.

I want to be the best one out of my family and do good. I don't want to be like my brothers they all in prison right now. I have seven brothers and one sister right now, and if I get out it's only gon' be four of us out, but it really three because I am in here too. But it's my first time with a big case, so I just hope that my family is doing ok.

I just don't want them to feel how I feel, but it's okay that I don't get visits not even one. I got to look at it like sometimes when you do something that's wrong it happens sometimes, but y'all know where I am coming from. I just hope I change I will never come back!

-Phanara

From The Beat: You write with such sincerity and we do hope you can get your self together so you do not come back. What will it take? Do you have the support to complete probation? We hope so.

Dead Of Life To Some

Blind by all accidentally beyond loving mistakes
Disrespected by selection of international fakes
Hate to see a youngsta achieve any plan
Then guarantee to laugh in ya face as if they were ya friend
Commitment to do danger to your dreams and beliefs
Silences of a friend but loudly of a scandalous theft
Out to bring dramatically to your open eyes
Business is business and tears are tears
Definitely they really don't care or pay attention
Consequences come up now you gone- missing
Vanish through the darkness of death or shame
To enemies and haters ya name will get rearranged
Required opinions of prosecutory to expense your breath
Assistant to investigate into your own death
Dead of life to some…

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: Sometimes, we cannot understand the exact meaning of what you are trying to convey. Do you always write in poetry? We would love to read a straight-forward essay from you that explores, in your own words, what changes you are experiencing in the way you look at life.

Tell Me Why

Tell me why I can't sell my weed or my pills or my coke.

But people can sell cancer in a box that will put a hole in your throat.

Or a whole in the ground for those millions of caskets that are being filled from cigarettes. The government must be pro cancer,

Tell me why cigarettes cost $5 to make a box.

I call it the box of death, but they make five dollars of a box.

Tell me why I can't make $10 off a gram of purple; I'm a hustla like them.

But they can't tax my weed.

So is that the reason tell me why?

-Lil' Dt

From The Beat: If you truly believe this – you should fight to change the law. You could go to law school and fight for it on legal grounds, you could become a writer and publish pieces advocating your position, you could start a lobby group and move to Washington D.C. The one thing you probably shouldn't do is keep breaking the law – it causes too much pain and stress to you and your family. That's the thing: Small power breaks the law. Big power changes it. Which kind do you want?

Violated

What's good Beat? Right now I'm hella mad because the last time I got arrested was about a year ago. I got out on F.P.U and the judge had a counselor coming to my house two days out of the week for about six months. But I was doing so good that he stopped coming in five what should have been six.

Five months after that I've been doing okay but not great, had a few little problems but nothing big. But after I got out I never rob houses no more or nothing.

I got arrested after about 10 months of doing well. And I got arrested for missing three days at school. My PO violated me for missing school. And that's messed up because now I'm doing six months in camp for some dumb shhh. I should have just gone to school.

-Cody

From The Beat: What caused you to not go to school? If you knew the conditions of your probation then you should have been attending classes. Was it really worth it missing those days of school? Those few days cost you six plus months of your free life.

To Be Taken Away From Your Parents

The worst part of being taken away from your parents is when they come take you away from your parents. The first thing they will do is take you to the CPS (Child Protective Service), office or to the closest C.T.S Shelter that will take you in until they place you with a foster home.

What I went through when they took me away from my mother and then I went to a CTS Shelter and then I went to a foster home in Gridler CA, and then I went back to the CTS Shelter, but this time instead of going to a foster home I went to juvenile hall in Ukiah CA, for vandalism.

After I done my time I went to my first group home and it was a level 12 group home. And then I kept running away from the group home and I was arrested in Sacramento County then I went to Trinity Ukiah, and I ran away from there and I came to San Francisco then to Hayward. Soon I got arrested and now I am here in this juvenile hall for stealing cars.

-Joaquin

From The Beat: Have you thought about why you run? DO you think if you stay put and do your program that you will get a chance to return home? Does your mother want you back? We are sorry to hear your story. What dreams do you have for yourself? Can you get yourself up and out of the system? Can you work on getting emancipated? We really appreciate you taking the time to write on this topic, when we know you did not feel like writing at first.

Sad Birthday

I wana be with my mom right now. I'm mad 'cause I'm not with her because today is my birthday I'm sad. If I was out rght now I would be with my mom my sisters everybody in my family.

-Omar

From The Beat: Well, we hope this is the biggest lesson in your life that you will learn from, so you never spend another birthday away from your loved ones.

Put It To Sleep

If I could put any words to sleep, it would be faggot.
I feel if I erased that word no gay people would hit on me or anybody else.
Then their would be no controversy over gay marriage
There would be something good on TV
If this happened I believe that kids would grow up to be more innocent
by not hearin the word faggot or gay.
If you did not here the word faggot
you would not get the chance to become gay because you would not know what it is.
This is why I would put the word faggot to sleep.

-Travis

From The Beat: Oh friend, you have plenty to learn, you may not like the word, but it is not going to change how a person feels towards another person. Why should you care? If you found out someone you truly cared about/respected was gay, would that change how you feel towards them? We hope over time and maturity you will grow up and embrace all people regardless.

Snowball

The first time that I ever saw snow was when I was really young, but recently I saw snow about a year ago. I was in Reno with a couple of my homies who went down their to kick it and have a cool time and the next day we went somewhere where there was snow and we played football and it was cool and we had a great time.

-Safi

From The Beat: Sounds like you and your boys had a great time in the snow. Plan on returning once you get your life straighten out?

Live To Die

Living for worldly things
Loving what money brings
But in the end
You just a memory
Keep it real and you'll see
Live for the future
Not for the presence
Short laughs being loaded
Your purpose is unfolded
Your choice for freedom or a cell
Then either heaven or hell.

-Elisi

From The Beat: One thing you point out in this short but sharp poem, is that even when you don't know it, you're always making choices that are taking us in a certain direction. Making no choice is also making a choice, when you think about it... so what are you deciding? Have you decided to "Live To live"?

Put It To Rest

If I could erase any word it would be "death."

If I could erase death this world would be a much happier place.

No homicide, suicide, or life sentence.

Imagine living life knowing that all of your love ones will remain forever there for you.

I often see family and friends heart broken and emotionally destroyed because of death. Life is no longer valued.

-Lover Of Life

From The Beat: Death brings great sadness especially when the person who is no longer with us has been taken out of the game of life way too early. Unfortunately death is apart of life, it is just too sad that way too many young people are not living full lives. Yes, death hurts.

Thoughts on Topics

"Hoe" This word can be disrespectful to older women that are raising children.

Who cares about kids using drugs?

I've never been around snow, because in the bay, it doesn't snow. There was one time where It was so cold that it started hailing on me. The hail felt like little tiny rocks bouncing off of me.

-Muhammad

From The Beat: We appreciate the statements you share on our topics, but next time if you are around, focus on one topic and take it further with details!

Juvi

I hate juvi,
but juvi make me think
about all the bad things I made
I done a lot of bad things
I didn't realize what I done until the system put me to rest
but the system don't make me change about the way I think,
I still have that criminal mind
So now that I have a lot of time to serve
I'll have time to think about my past, and what I want to do with my future.

-Diep

From The Beat: We hope you rid yourself of that criminal mind? This type of thinking will keep you forever down. The time is now to put your mind to use and think big thoughts, positive thoughts!

Who Cares When You Come to Jail?

Who cares, when you come to jail?
Probably your family, but they only can visit and send mail.
The hardest part, is try to convince the Judge.
You still get pee tested, when you not even doin drugs.
Who cares, when you sealing your mind.
You say the wrong thing, staff threatening you with room time
Than when you go bad, you get put on program.
If I get on program, I shutting the whole unit down.
But that another chapter, I'm a top citizen.
But who cares, if it a bad news the Judge ain't listenin'.
The D-A, think I'm a menace to society
Like they rippin' me open, and lookin' inside of me.
The funny thing about it, they don't even know me.
But just came a block, they think they know me.
Who cares what I just said?
It's only two things, play your cards right or end up dead.

-Lil' Curti Bo

From The Beat: The gift of a art is that it makes people care by reminding them of what matters... this poem/flow, like other pieces of great art, does an amazing job of helping us understand what it's like in jail, and also what it likes to feel all that rage of a young man locked up. It seems like for you, playing your cards right would include finding a way to use your talent and verbal intelligence to move out of this life. What do you think?

Who Cares Who Cares

Who cares about me? Me I care about me. No mom, no father, and no support at all but I keep confidence in myself because I care not only about me but about you too.

-Bonita

From The Beat: As long as you care about yourself and you have that self worth, no one can ever hurt you. You don't need anyone to succeed in this life except yourself, so keep caring about yourself!

Graffiti

Why do some people do graffiti? Some people do graffiti because they want to get paid for their art, like murals on walls, but some people do graffiti illegal because they want to show other people the' art. The art shows other people that they been here or they exist in this world or they are somebody and they are not a nobody.

-Showes

From The Beat: What is your story with graffiti? Do you draw? Thanks for your breakdown, now how 'bout a piece?

Take Care of You

Today, tomorrow, yesterday
Who really cares anyway?
I'm gonna live my life and go on with my day
He say, she say
But who really cares anyway
They play and now they lay
Others call it pay, but hey!
Who really cares, anyway
Another day so now which way?
You have today and tomorrow,
because you can't do nothing about yesterday
but really cares anyway?

-Cherrelle

From The Beat: Well do you care about yesterday if it effected you? Do you care? If you care that's all that matters.

Slaves

The word I want to put away is slaves because every time I hear that word it makes me think of back when all black people were slaves.

-Cj

From The Beat: An awful time to say the least. Now make your ancestors proud and get out of this institution and do something productive with your young life.

Who Cares Who Cares?

Wow, I think that my mom and my family care, because when I need something, they always right there for me no matter what, if I'm in a problem or other things. That why I love my mom and my family because they care about me. I know they care about me 'cause they always come and visit me up in the hall.

I know how people from the hall feel when they don't get a visit. One time my mom didn't come because she went to LA and the day that she didn't come I felt hella sad and then I started to cry. So now I know how other kids feel. There are some kids that they don't really care if they get a visit or not 'cause they don't got nobody to come see them and I know they feel.

So yeah I'm out late.

-Lil' Ghost

From The Beat: You may know how it is to not get a visit one time or maybe two, but truthfully you never will know what it is like to have nobody in your corner every single day. You are terribly fortunate to have a family that loves you. Now give them what they deserve!

A Cold And Wintery Tale

I was in ROP (Rites Of Passage) like a couple of months ago. It was the houses that I went to everyday. We would go to the Kirkwood Mountain and ski 'cause we were on the ski team. We would compete and talk to them ski girls them white girls. We had fun for a little bit until me and my patna ran and we was the best ones on the team. We wasn't trippin' though 'cause it was too cold over there anyways.

We went back to Oakland it was hella hot over there, just how I like it.

-L

From The Beat: So here you sit waiting for yet another placement? Don't tell us this was worth it either. What will it take for you to take the system serious? Do your program!

Cold Snow

The first time I went to the snow it was so cold but very fun. I kept on falling and slipping but other than that I made a snowman. Then I went to the top of the hill and slid down very fast and knocked the snowman down. Then I tried to snow board I did it but I didn't know how to stop so I rolled.

-Cj

From The Beat: Sounds like you truly had a great time in the snow. We bet you'd go back in minute if you could. We hope you do!

Bad Words

The one word I would want to put to rest would be "God Damn". I find its like a slap in the face of God. I believe it shouldn't be used no matter what! I myself try my best not to say it. Think about it as if you in His body. He is your father and we are his children. And we should be grateful that He is merciful. We should be nicer to Him.

-Alfred

From The Beat: We so respect what you say. Thank you.

So Cold

Some days it feels cold,
so cold that I can't feel no more.
Not even my finger when the tips turn blue and purple.
Some days it feels so cold that I'm floating
high up so high that only God can touch me and maybe
bring me down. Some days' I feel so cold that I want to
hurt,
do whatever to ease my pain
but then I have to think what comes up must come
down,
what is cold gets back hot again. And then I'm not so
cold.

-Feeling Warm

From The Beat: This is a great short piece. You describe your feelings to a point where we can actually feel you being cold. We can envision your feelings and all the pain you must go through. But like you said, you won't be cold forever, and sooner or later the sun has to shine down on a very talented person. Be smart! Make wise choices too!

What a Freaking Day

Today was just another county school day.
Boring, funny and whatever.
I sat behind that blue door thinking
when I'm ever going to see the Oakland streets again.
I want to be able to go to the store and see cousins and
other family
roaming the streets.
Also wondering is my mommie really coming to visit me
tomorrow.
Thinking about what if I was in my lil' brother's place
and thinking
when I'm coming home.
Thinking should I write a letter to the judge or just sit
back and let time pass. I was just another locked down
freaking day.

-Keekee

From The Beat: It seems you have a lot of things to think about during your time. Think about what you're going to do upon your initial release and how you can stay out of places like this!

The Pencil Flow

I don't know what to write about
so I'll just let my pencil flow
with my hand
through the wood to the lead
from my soul.
The lady said we only got a little time left,
my daddy say I only got a little time left,
but that's only for the judge to decide,
to collide, to reside back with the block,
clock ticks so slow, seven more days to go
back to court and see how these people want to decide
what my future should hold.
Even though only I should know
I want to know what's been going on.
Since I been gone I heard everybody's been asking about
me,
according to a phone conversation
five minutes long.
I don't feel like writing no more
I'm just ready to walk out of this facility
now I know that it was meant to be,
seven more days,
Lord I pray,
that this will be my last time for real
this time that He can show me the way.

-Danielle

From The Beat: We hope by the time we publish this piece that you're out with your family and loved ones once again. It must be hard going through the everyday struggle and not knowing what's going to be done to you the very next day. Only the strong survive, keep faith and you will have victory in the end.

Played Out

I'm starting to dislike a lot of things about them hood boys that's grinding on the block and that's dropping out of school. I hate to see smart young black men destroying their lives everyday.

What's wrong with going to school and bettering your education? What's wrong with listening to your mom or dad? What's wrong with getting a job? Step your game up the right way. Stop playing the white man's game because you will never win. It's a trap, now you're trapped for years and ain't got nothing.

I still love ya and I hope to see you all one day doing well.

-Bonita

From The Beat: Its always saddening to see someone on the block grinding, especially if the person who is doing the grinding has a hidden talent and is very intelligent. Once they touch the system, it is so hard to let go and you just get sucked in. To all those "hood boys" grinding, get out as soon as you can, because you don't want to hurt yourself or any of your loved anymore than you already have.

Bury The Word Love!

If I had to have a funeral for one word I would choose Love. I feel love is a just a word people use in order to get what they want.

For example some men will tell women they love them in order for you to sleep with them, and some may say they love you and if you love them you will do what they say.

I feel that there is no such thing as love, because if that was the case would the world be like it is today?

Love is word of manipulation and trickery you trick one into loving you so you can leave the cold without nobody.

Love is something I don't and can' t feel for anybody not even myself. I was fooled and now look where I am all because somebody told me they LOVED ME.

-Monique

From The Beat: Love is something that you can actually see. Love as an action and love as a word are two different things. If someone really loves you are gonna know. They are not gonna have to tell you. If someone loves you, you will see that through their actions and how they treat you. You just can't say I love you to someone and assume that they mean it. If someone says they are going to give you a hundred dollars, you ain't gonna believe them unless they actually give you the money right? Love is the same way if someone loves you they will tell you and demonstrate it to you. Sometimes we are the blind ones and don't see, but love ain't blind, love does truly exist. Good luck in finding love!

The First Time I Saw Snow Was In Reno

The first time I ever saw snow I was in Reno, Nevada it was the most wonderful thing I ever saw. It was very white and very cold but I never saw anything like it before. I really enjoyed the feel of it.

I'm thinking about taking my baby to go see it, but she's just not old enough yet. Surely when she gets old enough I'll take her to see the snow and how amazing it can be.

-Christina

From The Beat: Who took you to go see the snow? Was it your mother? Do you think once your daughter gets older, if she likes the snow, she will take her daughter? What else did you like about being in the snow?

Detained

Today I woke up,
To a different kinda scene,
A different kinda block,
With some different kinda fiends,
If you tryna figure our what,
What you reading means,
It's my own lil' beat,
That's within unit 3,

I do the things,
Staff tell me to do,
Eat, sleep, shower,
Don't learn shhh up in school,
To everybody else,
I'm considered a fool,
But a real squad ninja,
Never snitch on his goons.

-J Ban

From The Beat: It pains us to see such talent locked away — and especially because your description of yourself as "a real squad ninja" tells us that you're not ready to put those talents to work in a positive way for yourself. You've got the skills. Now, all you need is the will!

The "F" Word

A lot of people called me "failure" because I mess up a lot,
But I'm not a failure,
I call myself a champ, a king, a winner,
Because I'm no failure,
I'm a gentleman always staying out of trouble
Always doing the right thing.
I'M NO FAILURE.

-Joe Beezy

From The Beat: We wish people would bury that particular "F" word too. And you're right to scream that you're not a failure, even if you make mistakes. But, at the same time, can you be a winner as long as you allow yourself to give up your precious freedom to this system? We think that winning requires you to get an education, and then to move forward in freedom. What do you think?

Da Beef Wit' People

Man, it's real Harlem where I'm from. The beef gets real hectic in San Francisco. Ninjas always hatin' on each otha. People always wanna kill some people because someone is shinin'. To me, dat's some sucka shhh. They just mad because they not shinin' or because they don't got a lot of money.

It's like everybody want that one thing. Chinese food, for example. Everybody wanna take Orange Chicken off the map. But that's just how it is, feel me. I'm up here away from da snitches and the haters, but I'll be back in Harlem in no time.

-Quez Haarlem

From The Beat: We don't know anyone who wants to kill someone else for taking Orange Chicken at a Chinese restaurant! We don't see any sign in this piece that you want to avoid the beef you describe. That's too bad, 'cause you won't be getting any Orange Chicken in here!

Who Cares? Who Cares?

Who cares about me doing time?
Who cares about me on my grind?
Who cares about me locked up for the summer?
Who cares?
Family

-Jabba

From The Beat: If your family cares, are you showing them that you also care? If so, what are you doing in here?

Putting "Sick" To Sleep

A word that I would put to sleep would be sick or ill because sickness only leads to worser things like death. My mom was sick before she passed and my grandmother was sick for a very long time before she passed away.

-Darrin

From The Beat: It sounds like you want to get rid of sickness itself, not just the word. Even if no one ever used the words "sick" or "ill" ever again, people would still get sick and people would still die. Painful as it is, it's part of life.

Tenderloin

The TL is cool an' all when you be getting it, (makin' money) or smokin' and chillin' wit the homies, but when all the weed, and guns, and money are gone, all you really see are dope fiends, and crack. That's real life and that's what I was raised around.

No matter what it's like, I love my block. I love my homies, I love weed. And I got much love for my dope fiend homies 'cause they're all people too. It's just their drug addictions that make people want to separate themselves from them, but I say that's shady. The white man shouldn't have put that around everyone. But I don't care 'cause I love my block.

-Gb

From The Beat: We admire you for not abandoning your dope fiend friends, because — just as you said — they are all people too. (In fact, that's what we like to say about all the "enemies" we read about every week — we're ALL people, too. But whether it's in the TL or anywhere else, when you make money your way, smoke weed, drink, etc., you not only have to love your block, you also have to love the hall, because that's where you're going to be spending a lot of time... It's foolish to think you can have one without the other.

Watching My Brother

Something that makes me want to change my attitude is me watching my older brother going through the same things that I can't stop myself from going through. But I just have to put my mind and effort to it.

-Heem B

From The Beat: We almost didn't put this in because it's just a beginning, not a complete piece. To make it complete, you should add as many details as you can: What things are you going through? What is your brother going through? What specific changes in your attitude are you making, or are you planning to make?

First Snow

I went to Reno. That was my first time. I live in San Francisco, so I never seen snow. We made snowballs and threw it at each other, me and my family.

-Max

From The Beat: Better find a way to get out — and stay out — of here so you can enjoy the snow with your family again. (By the way, even in San Francisco, it snows about once every ten years!)

"When You Say That, Smile"

I hate when I be called a ninja by people that's not a ninja. But if you was a ninja you can call me a ninja. What if we get to calling the other people by their race? They will be mad and be ready to get their ass beaten, and then we will be in the wrong for whooping they ass.

-Man-Man

From The Beat: We gave the title to your piece from a book called "The Virginian." In that book, one card player accuses another card player of "cheating." When he does, the accused player pulls a gun, points it at the accuser, and says, "When you say that, smile!" In other words, some words can cause a different reaction in the mouths of different people and expressed in different ways. As for us, we wish the "N" word was retired by all...

Confused About You

I'm confused about you Baby...
Sometimes you say that you love me
And sometimes you say you don't know...
Sometimes you say you want me back
And sometimes you don't even wanna be friends...
Sometimes you hug, kiss and comfort me
And sometimes you act like you don't know me, Mija...
Sometimes you act like you care
And sometimes you don't even pay any attention to me...
My question to you, Baby, is...
Do you really love me and care?
Do you really want me?
Because really, Babe, I do love you
And I want to spend the rest of my life with you...
'Cause I'ma rider and I'ma ride with you
Till the wheels fall off, Baby...
Always and Forever,
Grumpy and Ms. Tears

-Grumpy

From The Beat: All relationships are hard because people are complicated. It would be nice if every day was filled with love and comfort, but that's just not realistic. We hope this relationship works out, but it sounds like you have some issues to work out. When you can, sit down and talk honestly about them with her, because if you pretend they aren't there, those problems will only come back to haunt you.

Lock-Up

Sometimes I daydream of being on the outs. But naw, I'm still in here locked up in my cell looking at these walls. It looks like no one cares about me. All they see in me is a youngsta all tatted up with all kinds of gang related tattoos on him. But I ain't tripping because I don't really give a shhh what they think. I am what I am and I'ma be what I always been, a gangsta. I been in the halls for three months and a half, and I still have a year to do in here. It's nothing. I'll sav it out and knock that time out.

-L Cartoon

From The Beat: So, allowing yourself to become a money-maker for the system and giving away nearly two years of your young life to strangers telling you what to do is "nothing." We only wonder when you'll open your eyes wide enough to see that all you have is this one life, and that every second you allow others to control you is something. We hope that eye-opening moment doesn't come too late, when you're locked away for years at a time, wishing you'd made some different choices.

The Pain

Being locked up
Enclosed in these four-sided rooms
Wearing purple and khaki
Has me goin' crazy
I know my family will always be there for me
But at times, I still feel so lonely
Not always knowing what to do
Or who to turn to
I wish they would just try to understand
Being in here is not where I want to be
I'm not a bad person,,,
I wish these messed up people would stop judging me
It seems like it's just the mistake I made that they see
But I'ma keep my head high
And fly high!
Ya feel me...

-Giselle Muñeca U5

From The Beat: The system is set up to pass judgment on people who break the laws, so as long as you give them a chance to judge you, they will. If you really don't want to be here, then you already know what got you here, so you know how to stay out of here! We know you are much more than the "mistake" you made. If you are lucky enough to have a family that "will always be there," then it's time for you to be there for them, too.

Who Cares?

Who cares about juvie? Who cares about court? Who cares about da Beat? Who cares about this gang or that gang? Who cares about you? Who cares about money? WHO CARES ABOUT PRISONS?

I DO!

A'ight, Beat, I'm out.

-Coo' B

From The Beat: What does it mean for you to care? Will your caring change anything about the way you live your life? How?

My Life

My life ain't like everybody. I live in the streets. That's what I do. That's what make me happy, the street is my back bone. Everything out there is my friend, no human being, but the core of thee street. It always hot where I come from, but you can't get mad with it. Not tryin' to die. It just time for you to go. That what the streets is all about. I mean, when you eat, sleep, shhh the street, you is the street. So what that tell you 'bout my life?

-Bf

From The Beat: If you are committed to the life you've been living — the street life you love so much — then we hope you're prepared to give up significant periods of your life to the prison street, because it comes with the territory. If you doubt us, just look around you... (By the way, we don't allow the name you chose for yourself in The Beat...)

Dreams

Lonely nights
Not happy at all; I try but I can't
I keep having dreams getting shot
It's hard
I can't get enough sleep
I'm in pain, then I need help
I'm angry and the only person that makes me happy is my mom
But then
There's a lot in my life
I just can't deal with the pain
I wish I had love and a fam like everybody else
I cry, I cry
But I'm getting deeper
I can't deal with this
My relationship goes so wrong nobody doesn't love me for me
That gets me mad
Haters be hatin'
And my heart is ripping apart
I'm tired of hurting mom
And I'm tired of my brother being far apart
Then what's wrong with me?
It's like an addiction
I can't think... if I do it's all negativity
I'm scared
I'm scared to get stepped on and hurt and done shady
That's why I keep it to myself
But the more I hold it, I'm getting far away
I feel pain like I'm getting burn
But in real life I don't know who to turn
I'm scared to get close and open with people

-Lucero

From The Beat: It's not just your mom you're hurting by allowing yourself to be taken away from her, you're also hurting yourself! When you don't know who to turn to for answers, try turning to yourself. You have much more knowledge of what is right and wrong (for you) inside yourself than what anyone else can tell you. Look deep within your heart and listen carefully to your conscience. If you follow what you see and hear, your life might look and feel very different than it does at this moment.

Who Cares?

What it do wit' da Beat? Me? Nothin'. Still holdin' it down for the block. But the police don't care about lockin' up young blacks. They just want to get the young black ninjas off the street. White people don't care 'bout us. They just letting us kill each other. They don't care 'bout us. They just building more jails than schools. Obviously they don't care about our education.

I'm 'bout to go. I'ma holla at y'all later.

-Young Herb

From The Beat: There's a lot of finger pointing in this piece. The police don't care. White people don't care... There's some truth in what you say (even though we know of some police and some white people who DO care...) But what is missing is a sense of responsibility for the choices you make. The police lock you up because you've done something that gives them the power to lock you up. "They" may be letting you kill each other, but it's y'all who are doing the killing. And if they built more schools, would you go? Even if you're right about those who don't care, don't you think it's time that you took responsibility for your own actions, and started caring for your own life and future?

Can't Wait

I can't wait to go home. I hate it here so much. I do not want to come back here no more. YGC is not the place. My PO is putting me in a group home. If you know me I might run away. I hate my PO. I hope I go home. It's my first time in here. I do not want to come back. I sit in my cell crying to go home. Man why my PO say we look like dogs in the cell and we locked up they won't let us out. Well that's all I got to go.

-Darkside

From The Beat: We really hope you hate this place enough that you'll keep your promise never to come back! But we have to tell you (from long experience) that if you run from a group home, all you're really doing is running right back here! A word to the wise...

In The Hole

Was up Beat? This is yo' boy Gangsta Enano still in this hole, which they call jail — somewhere I don't want to be, but brought myself into many times 'cause I'm always trying to do criminal minded things. I've been doing the same shhh for a long time now. I'm going to the Ranch, so one thing I got to say is all this shhh is getting old and everybody keep doing the same. This is yo' boy Gangsta Enano so stay up and keep yo' head up!

-Enano

From The Beat: If you keep thinking of yourself as "Gangsta Enano," then you aren't giving yourself much of a chance to break out of this mentality that keeps putting you back in the box. We wonder why you would so willingly put your life under the control of others — whether it be gang shot callers or system people — instead of making your own choices for your own life! If "this shhh is getting old," then maybe it's time to strike out on your own and try something different.

Growin' Up

A yung uce, growin' up in da street
Always had to stick a ninja up just to get a lil' dough
Posted on da block, got nowhere to go
Always holdin' it down, rain, hail and snow
My actions I try to keep positive
But I always have evil thoughts and it make me do stupid shhh
But when I get out, I'ma try not to do stupid shhh
And just stack my ends, get mo'

-Yung Uce

From The Beat: You say you're always holding it down, but who's holding it down now? Those "evil thoughts" don't make you do stupid things. In fact, nobody makes you do anything you don't choose to do. By putting you here, the system is holding you responsible for those choices. Do you accept that responsibility?

Taken Down

Man ,was good with The Beat? They trying to wash yo' boy and send me to CYA. All I did was run from a few group homes, an get took down with the banga. I don't know why they send people to group homes.

-Chuck

From The Beat: We're not feeling you, Chuck. If you got caught with a banger, then you took yourself down and have no one else to blame.

Who Cares!

Sometimes I feel like I forget the world and let 'em die
Behind tints tryna duck the world an' smoke an' ride
I'm tryna stay unda intoxication 'cause I'm finta lose my father
An' he gotta daughter
I'm on probation, I'm drinkin' liquor like it's water
Gettin' pissy drunk
And stayin' away from these lil' broads... They tryna get me slumped
I'm duckin' the law 'cause I ain't tryna do no fed time
And I just maintain this struggle an I keep tryin'
But how can I when my closest people keep dyin'?
I ain't lyin'
An' the law tryna bust ma click
But I scream "Forget the world," Man, I'm too young fa dis

-Butta

From The Beat: The problem is, you can't "Forget the world." And you can't escape it, either, by getting pissy drunk. All you can do is keep leading yourself into situations like this where, through your own choices, you've allowed strangers to take you from those you love and put you in a cage where almost your every move is dictated by others. You say, "I'm duckin' the law," but from where you sit right now, it sure doesn't look like you've been very successful.

Times Is Rough

What'sup Beat? It's ya boy Young Kada. I'm here to tell you about a time it is rough, If you know what I mean, you been through it. I was in something so rough it could've killed me. So I say it is no time to spend.

I got a lot of living before I die, so I don't have no time to waste. So all my homies out there know what it feel like to lose something or somebody. So all the homies I lost, I'm here to tell them I love them, and I gone ride wit' them when the times is hardest. So I'll see y'all later Beat. Holla at me later.

-Young Kada

From The Beat: You're right, there is no time to waste. Life is short enough without risking making it even shorter, if you know what we mean... What changes are you thinking about making — if any — that will reduce your chances of wasting time in places like this, or worse?

Who Care?

What's goin' on wit' The Beat? Yeah, ya boy Twitch holdin' it down in Unit 6.

Who cares? I care my ninjas getting shot at. But I can't do nottin' 'bout it. My ninjas getting wrapped. I think that's a blessin', but it tells me the block is hot. I mean the streets has always been ugly, but this is the worst I have seen my whole life. So I gotta try to change, I ain't sayin' I am all at once, but I'ma try.

-Twitch

From The Beat: Why do you think things are worse now than at any time in your life? Why do you think it's a blessing for your boys to get wrapped? We want to encourage those changes you wrote about. Even if those changes come slowly and one-by-one, that's how every journey begins — one step at a time. Go for it!

My Family Cares

Who cares? My family cares. When I'm in the streets doing what I'm doing, my family are always worried because what I'm doing they know I ain't safe. I ain't saying I'm doing something bad, but they know I'm in the streets with friends that have problems.

Me, I really don't want my family tripping and shhhh, but that's just me. I like being in the streets with my friends just hanging out and shhh, but mom's always thinking I'm doing something bad. Man, we're not even doing nothin' bad. We just smoking weed and shhh…

-Miguel

From The Beat: If you're not "doing nothin' bad," then what are you doing here? Your mom has a lot more experience than you, and she knows how quickly bad things can go down out there. She loves you and wants to have you with her and not locked away, or something worse. When do you think you'll be able to give her what she wants? She's sacrificed a whole lot for you. Maybe it's time to return the favor.

My All

His brown eyes tell me everything
His smile melts my heart
My best friend he is
He's all I got
And when I tell him, "Baby, I love you"
I ain't woofin'
Because I ain't no foo' to lie about love
In my heart I know he's the one
Yeah, many say we youngstas
With fresh hearts
But as to our opinion
Both of our hearts are…
Grown out of unconditional love
As I said…
His brown eyes…
His smile…
His friendship…
Is all I got
I love him

-Stephanie

From The Beat: In addition to the love that you celebrate so nicely in this poem, we love the fact that you treasure his friendship. You say it's all you've got, but that's not true because you also have you. So if you've got all this, you've got a lot! Hold onto it (and get out of here so you can celebrate it together).

Who Cares?

What's really good wit da Beat? I just can't help it. It's like every time I leave, I come right back. Ya boy 'bout ta get his mind right and stay out of here and get my money. But don't nobody care, and I really don't care either.

I got ma sis, ma thugs, and ma lil' females that only see how ya boy doin'. Moms ain't trippin', but it ain't makin' me mad. To me it really don't matter who care 'cause I'ma do ma thang and stay out here regardless 'cause next time I get out I'ma be 18 and I ain't trying to go to 850. So I care enough to stay out of jail. But I'ma do ma thang, get off probation and get mea head straight.

A'ight. I'm out!

-Young Money

From The Beat: If you're "bout ta get (your) mind right," that means you're waiting for some future time to do it. The future is now! Don't wait until you come back here — or worse — wishing you had done what you know you have to do. You say you aren't "trying to go to 850" but nobody in jail tried to go there. But that's where they ended up because they thought they could get away with things. Look around. This place is a kindergarten compared to what awaits you unless you really stop doing the things that have brought you here. Of course, you know all this. But knowing isn't doing. If, as you say, you don't really care, then how do you expect anyone else to care? You are worth more than this.

Could Care Less

Who cares about me… shhh, I don't know,
A lot of people act like they do but how far will they go,
Me an da squad been through jail, hell,
An' back again, could care less about a cell,
A shell or back to hell again
Some cats sold they soul,
But I don't have one… a lota ninjas on my head,
So that's why I blast guns
But what happens when a ninja catch a bid,
You might have two real ninjas,, but the rest go about they biz.

-Poon G

From The Beat: As long as you "could care less about a cell," then prepare yourself for a lot more of them. The system loves people with your attitude because they know it guarantees them a long career. When you do start caring, that's when things will start changing. Hope it happens soon…

Put It To Sleep: Haters!!

Hey, wassup with it Beat? It's ya boy, young Jay Pitt, ya know, doing real thangs as the ninja I am, ya dig. But one thing I would love to put to sleep is the hatred that's in most people in the world. It's been a lot of hatin' on other people that's been doing big things, shining, just living life big and beautiful, ya know. Got so much money a ninja like me let da Visa talk without somebody hating on you, on how you living instead of showing love and just come back big an' better ya know.

Fo' all you haters, put dat hating to sleep ASAP ya know yadaa!

-Jay Pitt

From The Beat: Have you put "hate" to sleep? Do you have enemies that you hate? Do you hate certain blocks or parts of the city? Do you hate other cities? In other words, are you just talking about hate that's directed at you and your boys, or does this advice also apply to you?

Losing Fights

I have good times in my life,
But every time I want to fight,
I always lose my might,
Every time I lose, I think it's right.

-Chrissy

From The Beat: We wish you would write a longer piece explaining what you mean when you say, "Every time I lose, I think it's right." The thing that turns an ordinary piece into a Piece Of the Week is the details you give us. So give us more.

Life Inside

What's up Beat! I'ma tell you a little thing about me. My name is Vago. I'm about to be 18, but I been five years in the game, "ya dig." So I seen a lot in the past five years. I been through a lot.

Now I might be on my way to the pen if I lose my 707. I been locked up for like three or four months now. I just want to start my time. Since I been here, I lost a close friend, my girl told me that I'm going to have a baby, and I found out that my 'hood is under feds watch, so it's all bad.

Well Beat, I'm out.

-Vago

From The Beat: We hate to read that another young man might be prison-bound. We want to encourage you to look in the Beat Without section of today's Beat, and read the letter to a young man in LA's juvenile hall from Dwight Abbott — who wrote the book "I Cried, You Didn't Listen," about growing up in CYA, and has spent about 46 years of his life locked up! We think that is experience which you cannot afford to ignore, even if you choose not to follow it. We'd love to know what you think of his advice once you read it.

Cold And Wintry Tale

I went to the snow one time with my cousins to Lake Tahoe to shoot deer and or anything that we could eat. It was fun doin' that shootin', all kinds of shhhh. My cousins ended up shooting hella deer, but I don't know what they did with it.

-Tito

From The Beat: We hope that they — or somebody — was able to make use of the meat (venison). We don't like the idea of just shooting animals for our enjoyment, but we eat meat so we know that some animals had to be killed in order for us to enjoy our meal. Have you ever eaten venison (deer meat)? Beef tastes better! By the way, how did you like the snow?

Don't Care

What it do Beat? I don't really care 'bout dis shhh, fo' real. I don't care 'bout school or anything dat got to do wit' bein' a good Samaritan. I just care 'bout my family and getting money and living. But I gotta do it moving Beat.

-The Dude

From The Beat: You say that all you care about is your family and getting money, but you've given the system all the power over your life it needs to take you away from the only things you care about — your family and making money! What's up with that?

My Blithe Life

I'ma tell y'all in on how my blithe life is like. Money I like getting. Cars I love driving. Places I like going. Girls I love seein'. Family I love being wit'. Fun I like having. Parties dat be crackin'. Haters I stay away from. But love ninjas dat go dumb.

-Jeremia

From The Beat: If you mean you enjoy all these things, that's okay. But is your life really all that blithe (light hearted) when you have to hand it over to strangers who tell you what to do and when to do it?

Rose

I'm growing like a flower
I'm losing so many petals
But I get stronger and grow some more
I rise more higher
I'm happy when it's a beautiful day
But when it's raining and I'm wet I'm sad I try to cover myself up to be dry and nice and be in a gorgeous day
I'm scared if somebody comes up and steps on me, but I would grow once not twice, but a million of roses

-Lucero

From The Beat: What are you doing to make sure that rose opens up to its full potential? The best gardens require tender care, someone to give them water and avoid the weeds. How are you nurturing your garden?

Put "Violence" To Sleep

I would put the word "violence" to rest because it's too much of it going on. Every day something happen to somebody. If it ain't my people, it's somebody else and I'm getting tired of it.

Nowadays it's us youngstas killing each other off with this street violence... So I would like to bury this word "Violence."

-Ricardo

From The Beat: We don't think it's the word you want to bury as much as the thing itself. And we love to attend that funeral! What we like most about this piece is not just that you are tired of the violence (which should lead you to take steps along a different path), but that you recognize that every victim of violence is somebody's loved one. We hope you do what you can not to contribute to the senseless street violence that has already claimed far too many beautiful young people!

This Guy

When I see dis guy he gives me the chills,
He runs through my mind until he's my deal,
He's short with bold dreads, it gives me the appeal,
When he smiles he shows me his drill,
I like dis guy what he can do,
He shows me love... what I can do?
He stays inside of my grill

-D-M

From The Beat: We understand why boys (or a particular boy) might be on your mind, but we encourage you to focus on your own situation first. Figure out what you have to do (and what you have to stop doing) in order to get out and stay out of places like this so you can be with the person or people you love.

Who Cares, Who Cares

Who care if I have sex and have a baby?
Who care if I smoke a drug and die?
Who care?
I care, my mother care, daddy, but that all who care
But I don't think that they really care
They say they care.
But sometimes I don't think I care
And that means I don't love myself

-Shelly

From The Beat: You're absolutely right, Shelly. If you don't care about those things yourself, how can you expect others to care? If there are things about yourself that you don't love, we hope you look at ways to change those things so that you can be the person you want to be, and the person you love being.

Trust No One!

Trust no one we all we got,
Came to jail and I lost a lot.
Trust no one I got a few,
Now I'm in jail in a 8 by 6 cell looking at you
Trust no one these snitches got me thinking a lot
Trust no one they told a lot
Now I'm in jail off the block.
These for the lil' homies we all we got

-Illy Ack

From The Beat: We don't see much original thinking in this... the same old thing we read week after week. When will you start thinking for yourself? When you give the advice to "trust no one," does that mean you shouldn't even trust yourself? The one thing we wish you'd think more deeply about is the connection between this view of life (which so many others express exactly as you have) and the fact that you've lost so much, including your freedom! To us, that would be a signal to start re-examining our beliefs to see if they really are helping us or hurting us...

Missin' Mom's Cookin'

What it do Beat? My name is 8-Ball from the city of Daly City. I be out dere all da time just kickin' it and getting bent with da homies. That's how I spend most of my days. I've been chillin' up here in YGC for 38 days. I don't know when I'm getting out... hopefully soon.

I can't wait till I get on da outs. I miss kickin it wit my homeboys and da fam. The food here don't compare to mom's cookin'. This food ain't crackin' at all. When I get out I'm finna get together wit' da homies and throw a BBQ and get bent.

-Eight Ball

From The Beat: We can understand why you'd want to get out of here so bad and get back to your home cooked meals and playing with your boys. But unless you start thinking of making some changes in how you live your life — unless you focus on some things that are more important to your future than "kickin' it and getting bent" — you'll just keep finding yourself in situations like this, or worse, wishing for things to be different. Only YOU can make them different. We hope you do!

I'm Stressin'

A friend once told me killing yourself is a permanent solution to a temporary problem...

I just came from a mental hospital,
because I wanted to kill myself.
But it was too hard for me to do,
All I think about is how I'ma do life.
That's why I wanted to die.
I got kicked out a group home,
yet again, but I only had a month and a half.
I'm hecka trippin' because it seems like I always fail,
and I get so many chances... I can't do right.
Really it feels like a maze with no way out,
Inside of me, it's crazy,
I'm 18 and my PO talking YA,
but I'm praying to stay away.
It's really different because I feel I'm a different person,
but doin' the same mistakes,
I'm goin' to stay in there though,
and do what I got to do to stay alive,
'cause I control it,
Stress, it's there for a reason.
I just got to change it.

-Halo

From The Beat: It hurts us to read that you thought — even briefly — about taking yourself out of the world permanently! Your friend was 100% correct. Don't ever start thinking that you will always be the same as you are today, or that the world will always look as it does at this moment. People grow. Circumstances change. New people come into your life. The snapshot of today will not look like the picture of tomorrow. Your heart, your decency, is much needed in the world. Don't cheat us by taking yourself out of it!

It Ain't Cool

What's up with The Beat? This yo' boy Ant Gotti.

Now though being locked up for a 187 ain't cool. Going to sleep every night stressing because they talking about 25 to life. Then you got the "public pretender" telling you hella bs. Then these counselors acting like jerks. Then that's when you just explode! And the supervisor come talking about room time. How you gone give time to somebody while they doing time!

-Ant Gotti

From The Beat: Whether you committed this 187 or not, somebody is dead while you are alive, complaining about having a bad lawyer, bad counselors, bad supervisors... It's all "Poor Me, Me, Me..." We hope you'll excuse us if we give a thought to the dead victim, that unique human being who will never have the ability to complain about anything ever again, and whose mother is left destroyed, her world shattered. Like we said, whether you did this or not, our thoughts go to the victim. We wish some of yours did too...

Who Cares?

What's good wit' The Beat? This ya boi Batman coming from that nice unit 7. Let me tell you a little secret and it goes like this: I am who I am no one can judge me but God. I know the truth hurts. Yeah that was cold as ice, but who the hell cares about what the hell I just said? And wit' that I'm gone.

-Batman

From The Beat: We almost didn't publish this because we don't think it says much of anything that a thousand others haven't said before... But since we left it in, and since you believe that nobody can judge you but God, allow us to ask you this simple question: What do you imagine God's judgment about you is?

I been to snow a couple times, and I ain't go lie, I had hella fun.

The Snow Trip

What's good with The Beat Within? Me, shhh, just chillin', keepin' it lit fa the block like always.

But Man, I been to snow a couple times, and I ain't go lie, I had hella fun. I went with this youth park by my house called Hunter's Point Youth Park. When we got there, I was like, "Damn! This place hella fat." We started skiing down the snow. One time I was trippin' goin' hella high up the snow, so when I got off the thing that bring you up, I was chalk when we got off. So I had to be the star that I am and go down that mountain.

But when we was done and all over, I ain't go lie, that was the first time in hella long I had fun. When we got back to the 'Jects, ninjas was actin' like they didn't have fun, but I know they did.

-Young Bundy

From The Beat: We know you don't like to be put in the POW section, but that's where we'd put this piece if you let us. Thank you for reminding us, and all our readers, that you can have wonderful fun without getting drunk, without getting high, and without having to spend a lot of money by just going somewhere as simple as to the snow! We are so glad you had this experience to remember — and maybe to look forward to again some time. Why do you think it was important to your friends to pretend that they didn't have fun even though they did? We know what you're facing, so it warms our hearts to know that you can still think about the good times that didn't involve dong things that can lead you here... Maybe one day you'll be keeping it "lit for the snow" and not for the block...

Life's Measure

There's more to life than just pleasure
It's just a lil' bit of life's measure
You say you got everything—that's a lie
There are some things even money can't buy
Life ain't all about alcohol, drugs, money, and sex
There are lots of stuff you haven't tried—it's complex
If life was simple, there wouldn't be emotions
But it's not emotions run deeper than the oceans
Life ain't about gettin' drunk, or gettin' high
It's about the hello and good-bye
It ain't about getting a girl and having sex
It's about having a companion, taking burdens off your chest
Come clean with the drugs, like crystal meth
If you don't stop shhh like that, it can lead to your death

-V Tech

From The Beat: For you the essence of life may be having a companion, but for many teenagers, they hunger for the wild joys of life–boy/girlfriends, music, parties, adventures, etc. Your advice about getting off and staying away from drugs is very wise.

Ain't Nobody Stupid!

I feel dat da word call stupid is not real. Ain't nobody stupid. Nobody should feel like they are stupid. Some people act dumb, but that don't mean dat they are dumb. The people that's called stupid are smart as everybody else. That's how I feel.

-Antonio

From The Beat: We agree that making someone feel "stupid" is stupid! Different people are "smart" at different things, and we should concentrate on what they are good at and not what they are bad at. What do you think you're particularly good at?

Who Cares? Who Cares?

Who cares! I ask myself that every time. But when I ask myself that, the first thing comes to my mind is my family. The reason why I choose my family is because who cares... my family cares. My family cares because they come to my court date to support me. Plus they come to visit me at the same time I felt bad for people. That's why I love my family.

-Chunky

From The Beat: We can see that you know how lucky you are to have that family support, because not everybody has it. Is that why you feel bad for people?

Who Cares...? Who Cares...?

What's up wit da Beat? Dis ya boy Meel writin' up on this piece, "who cares?"

Me being locked up, there're a lot of people that care — care for me being locked up and can't do the things I want to do when I want to do them. There's a lot of people in my life that care about me not being home for my family. There're a lot of people in my family who care for me because of the case that I'm in here for. In my life, I have a lot of people who care for me and that's because there's a lot of people who love me.

-Young Meel

From The Beat: You are very lucky to have people who love you and stand by you. Do you count yourself among the people who care for you? We hope you find a way to care for yourself enough to treasure your life and your freedom. You owe yourself nothing less — and you owe your family nothing less, too!

When I Get Out

I'm looking forward to being able to sleep in my own bed, and I'm looking forward to being able to take a shower when I want to, and go and leave when I want to and wear my own clothes.

-Squeak

From The Beat: Of course you're looking forward to all these things because they represent freedom. But are you also looking forward to changes that will keep you in your own home and sleeping in your own bed? Without making those changes (and you know what they are), you will be writing more sad pieces from behind walls wishing you were somewhere else...

Death Before Dishonor

Death before dishonor is what they told me
Or was that just a way for them to get me to be down?
They told me we were a team and a family
Now that I'm down
They have disowned a member of the family
Isn't that something?

-Dubb

From The Beat: It must be lonely and disillusioning to know that those you trusted and relied on to be your family have abandoned you. Okay, you may be pretty much on your own, as scary as that may be. But don't let these guys get you down. The dishonor is on them.

They Tell Me To Do Good

Who cares? All my loved ones are behind me. They are always telling me to do good. That's how I know they care. They show me love that can't be seen by no one but me. I can see the love and care they show me.

-Fat Thug

From The Beat: It's so nice to have loved ones who care for you and show you that they care. But, FT, are you showing them that you care for them (or for yourself) by getting yourself locked up over and over again? Telling them you love them is not enough. It's time to show them by not allowing yourself to be taken away any more!

"Who Cares"

What up Beat? Who I think really cares is ma family, girl, and ma friends. But who really cares is ma family and girl because all ma bad choices I made, they stuck by me through ma troubles and encourage me to do right till this day.

Don't get me wrong, ma real friends will do tha same, but all tha rest of 'em care about is pullin' licks and getting money. Not that I'm sayin it's wrong, but it ain't all about it when it comes down to business. But anyway, all I'm sayin' is just choose the right friends because not all of them is gonna be by your side till the end.

A'ight then Beat.

-Twon

From The Beat: Do you think "pullin' licks" is right? If you truly care about the family that has stood by you through thick and thin, don't you think you owe them something in return?

Focused On Having Fun

What's up wit' The Beat? Man this Young Jeff up here, doin' me. This is about to be my last week writing with you, because I'm about to get out next week and go out there an' see what's new, but fo' real, maybe I'll get with y'all program when I touch down on the streets, but ma main goal or should I say what I'm focused on the most right now, is having fun and taking advantage of my freedom, because it's easy to say what you're gonna do, then to put it to work, so we'll see. But I'm definitely gonna have fun, because I've been thinking about it for thirteen months, so we'll see what happens when I get out.

-Young Jeff

From The Beat: Congratulations on earning your freedom. You deserve some fun, but we hope your year plus at the Ranch has given you some time out to think about your life and redirect it to something legal, positive and productive!

Pray To Whatever God You Believe In

I'm tired of hopin' and wishin' and wantin' and dreamin'
That's why I'm constantly plottin' and schemin'
So when you see me, better pray to whatever god you believe in,
'Cause I'm walkin' with demons,
They in my head and won't quit holl'rin and screamin',
So I'ma raise hell as long as I'm breathin',
Just like any other rebel without a cause or a reason.

-Lonely Boy

From The Beat: We just can't believe that the same person who wrote the POW, "All For What?" also wrote this. Oh, we can tell the same HAND put these two pieces on paper, but we can't believe the same MIND is behind them. The viewpoints expressed in this piece are 180 degrees opposite the viewpoints expressed in the other. Please tell us that you plagiarized this piece from someone else because if both of these pieces come out of one head, then those demons you write about here are ripping you in two!

Feeling Institutionalized

If I could take a word and put it to rest, I would choose the word institutionalize. I think that you should get used to the program in jail, but you shouldn't get too comfortable. It's sad how people that get locked up come back. For those people who get hard time or keep coming back, jail is like a second home.

I would never be institutionalized, my home is out their with my family and friends.

Sometimes I feel like jail is my home. I been here for a while, I might be looking at a couple of years. I can't let myself get institutionalized. I got to have hope that I'll make it home.

-Notorious Viet

From The Beat: Nobody wants to get used to the confines of a facility that keeps you locked up. Home isn't that place, home is the place where you want to be. Never give up hope and all will turn out well in the end.

Put Crack Down

The word I'll put to sleep is crack. It make you get paid but messes people up. People don't care 'bout fiends. They care bout getting paid.

-Smokey

From The Beat: We don't think it's the word you object to, but the thing itself. Yes, we have seen the ugliness that crack produces (both in the user and the seller), and we also wish it would be put to sleep.

The Cold Streets

If you know like I know the streets are a cold place to be, its life.
You make the wrong move you get put in a ice box forever
we all know you wouldn't want to be there
got to be told when to eat when to go to sleep but you do it
anyways 'cause that's your only choice
some people stay there 'cause they make the wrong choice or have no where to go
but if you stay strong you'll get out of that box and stay out that blizzard
wit out yo sweater.

-Jp

From The Beat: There are a lot more choices than to be in the streets and do unlawful things. Even if you feel as if you're down and out, you could dig yourself out of your grave. Don't let the dirt overwhelm you and bury you alive, because as long as you have a heart beating, then you have a choice to survive.

Rude Boy Goes Stewie

Mind stays on point, knowledge I spit the truth
Charging me as an adult, but still labeled a youth
Fake friends, and cracker jacks, can't trust a soul
Feelings are gone, heart is a hard piece of coal
Stay solid and never break, never step out of boundaries
Tryna give me several years, so I say screw the county
Momma can't deal with the situation and its conclusion
Marks talk a lot but no actions have been proven
Stewie boy, go hard, no stopping, stay real
Always eating, plus my squad, got multiple meals
Driftin' on a memory, females and past relations
Just expressing my feelings no rapping just facts
Until then I'm stewie, go eighteen in the max

-Edgar

From The Beat: Your mind has to stay on point to get over this obstacle. You can't let this setback put you down so far that you won't be able to get out of the hole you're in. Instead of going stewie, why don't you read some education books and prepare yourself for whatever the county throws your way? Mature up young man!

Who Cares? Who Cares?

Who cares? Who cares? Just have some fun
Take a hit from Mary Jane and pass the blunt
Who cares? Who cares? Just drink everyday
Pour out Barcardi shots and drink away
Who cares? Who cares? Just want to have a good feel
Just want to go chill and go drop a pill
This is how you do and this is how you is
I guess Juvenile hall is the place to stay off that shhh.

-Viet Tiger

From The Beat: If you live life without a care, then you're already giving up on yourself. If everyone else gives up on you, you can still stride to be the best and push forward, and never stop. Care and succeed in this world. Consider getting support to stay away from the drugs that plague you.

Who Cares

Who cares? Well no one really.
The only people in my life that care bout me is my two sisters and brother.
Oh and my dad.
I'm not too sure if my mom cares 'bout me any mo'.
I know for a damn fact the system doesn't give a damn shhh 'bout me or you.
Most likely the only people in mine or your life that care bout you or me is my family. Pero, like I said once before. There still ain't no one you can trust including your family. Man I don't know why I do the things I do with the people I do it with
because if anything went down, I know they wouldn't care 'bout what would happen
to me. And I bet none of your homies really deep down inside them,
they don't care about you.
There may be some real homies out there that you got that care
I have only one boy that I know that cares 'bout me.
Oh yeah, forgot to mention that I'm finally off restriction and can kick it with the rest of the homeboys in Juvenile.
Well I'm out.

-Knuckles

From The Beat: You make a lot of good points in this piece. The first is that the only person who probably does care about you is your family, or at least the most. And the next is that all of your so called homies, they don't really care about you. Do your family proud and forget about all of your homies, they don't mean more to you than your family do they? Take a good look at yourself and realize who truly plays a part in this incarceration!

Ten days

Everybody has good and bad days. For some, they're traumatic, but for others - they just can't get enough. I will tell you the best day that I have ever had. I got arrested one night for a warrant that was put out for my arrest. It felt like the worst day of my life.

The next day I got the news that the girl that I love was pregnant with my child. I felt so good. And the same day I got more good news. I was going to only do 20 days hall time for cutting off my E.M.P bracelet. I would say that was the best day that I have had.

-Maccready

From The Beat: If you are serious about being a dad, and we think you are, you haven't seen anything yet. Get out and start preparing for your new life. That means getting a degree and a decent job. When that baby enters the world, along with many challenges, you will experience the greatest joy. But you must be prepared. It's not just you, any more. There are three of you. And the truth is, you've had a hard enough time just taking care of yourself. So, focus, focus, focus. Get ready for what could become the best time of your life.

Put To Rest

The word I'd put to rest would be "hate". Why? Because "hate" is a strong word that is used very often in conversations, and people never seem to know how much destruction it causes.

-Daniel

From The Beat: Daniel, we hear you. We also suspect that as long as there is so much "hate" in the world, that people will have to find a word to describe it. What would be a better word to signify that nasty emotion?

This Morning

One morning I woke up and went to school. I was so close to getting out. But then I saw two cops and the school principal. I was under house arrest at the time. So the cops picked me up and took me to the office. And then I remembered I had pot in my pocket. So I got a new charge. And got released home.

The next morning my dad said I got suspended for a week. And he tells me to go clean the yard. So, I am only ten minutes into cleaning the yard and I go up my stairs and get a blunt and I start smoking. After that, I see a cop car coming, so I stop smoking and go inside.

-Dougubay

From The Beat: Sounds like you are slow to learn, D. You keep pushing the line. And you keep getting caught. Maybe you like it in the hall. Maybe you like being told what to do. Keep it up and you'll be told what to do all your life. Is that what you really want?

My Plan

What's good Beat fam this be your girl Nono from Sunnyvale yee!! Well I'm leaving tomorrow July 20th and I ain't coming back. I promise y'all this, 'cause I'm getting my stuff together and I'm going to do me.

I'll focus on finishing school since I'm a junior and I'm behind in credits. But I'm going to walk the stage and then go to a community college. Then I'll transfer to a university and major in Criminal Justice.

Yup, yup, trying to fulfill my dreams, but also enjoy life at the same time. I'm just trying to do good and be successful in life. Just pray for me, alright.

But to everyone up and in here - stay up. Choose your battles wisely. Alright - much love and respect. I'm gone for good!!

-Nono

From The Beat: We do wish you well, and our version of a prayer is headed your way. We expect to hear good things about you, and from you. Please keep in touch.

Who Cares?

What's up Beat? It's me, Merino, just chillin'. I'm putting my two cents in on "who cares?"

I don't really think anybody should care, at this point, because it's my fifth time in here and my family is up to here with me, and the courts and the system. But now I'm more educated, and older and wiser, so I think I can make it on the outside with these new tools I've learned in the hall.

One thing I've just got to get off my chest is that some of these youngsters say that these counselors don't help us out. That's BS, because they usually go out of their way to help us out. But that's all from me for this week.

-Merino

From The Beat: We're with you. We know that lots of the counselors go the extra mile to help kids out. But it's a two way street. You have to want the helping hand for it to do you any good. And we know that you have been open to help. You are a wiser fellow now than you were a few months ago. We see the progress, and your counselors must see it too. You care, they care, and we care. Give folks a chance, and most of them will care, and do care.

Them Days

I remember January fourteenth, my birthday, was the best day throughout this whole year. Even though my man Julio wasn't there, because he was locked up, I had a good time kickin' it with the homies, drinking at my pad, remembering the good times I experienced with my boyfriend when he was out.

Most of my good homies were there – my little sister Mousie, my homies Chino, Chico, Yogi, Sharky, and my other sisters Roxanna, Tiffany, and Ceci. I was very under the influence, along with everyone else. I just want to say that if my boyfriend would have been there, it would have been better. If he reads this "I love you."

-Judy

From The Beat: OK, we accept that this was the outstanding day of the year for you. It is great to spend time with friends. But being 'very under the influence' is not our idea of time well spent. We're surprised you can remember it. We want you to know that life offers so much more than being 'very under the influence'. Most of the best that life offers can only be experienced with a clear and open mind. The real best is yet to come. Are you willing to give it a try?

Who Cares?

Who cares if we get locked up? GOD!!
Who cares if we do drugs? GOD!!
Who cares if we are hurting inside? GOD!!
Who cares if we live or die? GOD!!

-Jesse

From The Beat: OK, you've asked four questions and answered them. Now what? Are you going to wait for GOD to tap you on the shoulder and solve all of your problems? Or are you going to tackle them yourself? And, though it might surprise you, there are people who hardly know you who do care what happens to you. There are people who will read your story in The Beat and will be very moved by it. They may even shed a tear. But they know, as you know, in your heart, that you have to make the decision to care for yourself. When you start caring enough for yourself, doors will open that you never knew were there.

Love!

Who cares? A lot of people for me for me. My mom and dad care for me. They want me to succeed in life. They want me to have everything. They will give their lives for me. Matter of fact - they don't care for me, they love me.

My lady loves me. She decided she gonna wait for me for 18 months to get out of alternative placement. They show me so much love, I'm make them, and me happy. That's my word.

-Avalani

From The Beat: What can we say, except – get started, now, today.

My Brother

Well, I've been thinking, because I came back, and I've been here a lot of times, and this time I'm done. I mean, I have my lil' brother following in my foot steps and he has been getting into trouble. It seems that he does not give a shhh. Me and my dad have been telling him, but it's one ear-n-out the other.

I mean Prop 21 is no joke. I see movies about Prop 21 and there are kids that are his age just for doing crimes like him and they're in CYA. I just wish he did good and would think before he acts.

I'll be out soon, to a group home, but my upmost respect to all who know me, and to my brother who I love and miss. Lots of hugs!

-Unknown Sister

From The Beat: You can help your brother by showing him that you've learned a lot from the mistakes you've made. Do well in your group home. Write home often. Speak truth to your brother. He needs to hear it. Let him know you understand why he's off the track, but that he's got to get back on it. He'll listen, if you don't preach, but show.

It Could Have Been Me

One day when my homeboy called up me and my sister to me him and his friends so we could all drink and smoke together. We were walking out the door and my sister stopped and said "nah let's go back inside I don't' think it's a good idea." So we went back in the house and called them and said we're not gonna go maybe next time.

The next day around twelve in the afternoon I got a call saying my homeboy and his friends got jumped. See if me and my sister would had gone that could have been us.

Well that's my short lil story for ya well everybody stay up .

-Fame

From The Beat: Good call, then again, it's only a matter of time if this is the lifestyle you live having to worry about getting jumped and dealing with drama.

Cheating Death

My topic today is "cheating death." I've cheated death a couple of times. But this one time I'll never forget. Me and the homeboys were all chilling at my primo's pad. Everything was normal. My primo's pad is close to our rivals' hood, but we never trip off it because we never got ran up on there. But in case we did, we had our secret hiding spots.

Well, we're having a good time kicking back. I go the bathroom and when I'm walking out I see a bunch of cars and guys jump the fence. I tripped out for a second but then, as I grabbed a bat and opened the front door, I heard them shooting.

After a couple of minutes they bounce. My homeboy got shot and another homeboy got stuck. Every one was pissed. They went to the hospital.

Sometimes I think it could have been me, because he had to go to the bathroom too, but him being a gentlemen, he let me go first. Life's crazy - how things work out. But most of us are willing to play at our own risk. That's it. And to my only brothers - keep your head at level and shoulders square. Mucho love and respect.

-India

From The Beat: This is an alarming story, and a familiar one, by now, to those of us who read The Beat. It's alarming because you speak of violence and danger as if it were as common as going to the store for a loaf of bread. No one, young or old, should have to live with this kind of fear always lurking, and sometimes striking. What, India, do you think could be done to stop this violence from happening?

Systems Twisted

Another soldier lost in the system. Prop 21 got my uso's feeling helpless. I feel for my usos and my boys in the max units. All I can say is keep your head up. I wish I could help but this system is twisted. Got youngsters doing life times. How could they better them selves when you've got them in a cage? You be looking down, but little do you know, my boys are intelligent young men that just made a mistake and are trying to better themselves. But trust, if y'all give them a second chance, I promise you this - they won't be back.

Some say the system of juvie is suppose to help youngsters stay out of the pen but how, when you sending young teens and up to county? Y'all just contradicting yourself. Laws be canceling out other laws.

Maybe if you took ten steps in our shoes and got to see us for us, instead of judging us off what's on a paper, maybe, maybe, you guys could see that we're worth giving a second chance to. If you were me and I were you I would open my eyes and see the potential we have, and hear what we have to say.

Most of us are strong minded and have a dream that's waiting to be fulfilled. We're only human. We make mistakes and what not, plus, we're still young.

All I have to say is - stay up. Know you all are in my prayers. Jus take care of business and before you know it, you will be home.

-Nono

From The Beat: You know, of course, that we here at The Beat would like nothing better than for society to see the things in you that we see. If intentions were all it took to change the world, or our small piece of it, the problems you talk about would have vanished long ago. But lots of difficult work remains. You can do your part by staying on the right track and speaking out. Good examples are powerful teachers. Show the world what you're made of. And we'll keep doing what we do, and we'll keep trying to find new and better ways to help. Thanks very much for your piece.

Happy Days

My happiest day was when my boyfriend told me he loved me, on 5/16/07. I was so happy to hear that cause I was already in love with him. I know it's kind of dumb to say that only a guy can make me happy, but this is my first real love. It's a trip. He has a lot of respect for me and I know he will never cheat. The hell with what every one else said. He is a good man and I love him.

-Cosko Lady

From The Beat: We're happy for you. But we do want you to know that even true love has its bumpy roads. If May 17, 2007 continues to be your greatest day – more power to you. Now start focusing on what brought you to the hall. If you want to be happy, you have to deal with that.

Them Good Old Days

Well, I had some good days and some bad days. My bad days are always in here. My good are on the outs.

Well, my best day ever is when they told me that I was getting out of here. That made me happy when I got a release day. I never had one of those.

My worst day was when I came back here and hurt my mom and my dad. They hate coming in here and seeing me like this. I send them through so much stuff, like coming to my courts days. And that jeopardizes their jobs. Well, that's all I got to say. Everybody - stay up.

-F

From The Beat: We're glad you'll be going home. But we're a bit confused. If you've been in the hall at least twice, how could you only have had one release date?

Missing My Brother

I haven't seen my brother for more than three months. He got locked up. And later, my dumb ass got locked up for a couple of months. But I see him in the cafeteria on dinner movement, so this goes out to my brother. I love you brother, and miss you. I'm praying for you to get out soon. Much love to my bro.

-Your Sister Baybe-G

From The Beat: How will you guys help each other when you get out? What can you do that will make it more likely that each of you stays on the right path?

Funeral For The "N" World

Orale Beat and Beat readers! Allow me to extend my utmost love, honor, and respect. Hope all is well and everything going good for everyone. A word that I would put to sleep is the "N" word. I'm not African-American but I do have homies and family that are. I feel that that word alone is very disrespectful and when people of that race go to other people and say "what up nigga" I feel that they discriminate against their own kind. They always complain about how they get discriminated against by other people, but they turn around and do the same thing to each other. I would just like other people to put this word to rest. I know I am. Well Beat, that's it for tonight.

-India

From The Beat: Good word to say goodbye to.

Chicago: In the 1990s

Back to when I was a youngster 1990's: I remember those cold days in Chicago, Illinois, damn I mean freezing days 'cause when it snows it snows in a serious way. It was beautiful and fun, because the snow would go up to my knees.

Everyday after school I would walk home and have so much fun making snow angels and snowballs with my sister. I had a blast. But, in a way, I hated the cold snowy winter 'cause I had to freeze my ass off. The cars couldn't even be driven 'cause the streets were blocked out with snow you had to wash your car with hot water to unfreeze the windows, so yeah, it was a pain up the butt Anyways, that's just a little of me and freezing my but off in Chicago even though I had fun too. I miss it, 'cause here in San Jo it doesn't snow. Well, late to all my reader! Peace out. Always – Dimples in the house.

-Eva

From The Beat: This piece really brings a wintry day to life in the summer time with the little details like the snow angels and the hot water on car windows.

Put It To Rest

Well I have lots of words that make me mad and what not. Feel me, but this word makes me go insane and I despise it very much. I hate how females call other females it, making it seem like it's ok for us to say it, feel me? This word is bitch, c**t, bop, hoe… feel me?

Yeah, some females may carry themselves like they are, or they're called that just because they got hella attitude, or what not. But feel me, it's dumb. Just because some females wear skirts, or short shorts, or stuff like that, feel me, or because they go different colors in their hair, or if they're with someone that's been around. She a hoe or a c**t. I hate those words and I wish heads would never say things like that.

-Noel

From The Beat: We wish that too.

Message To The Old Me

Well I have plenty of times I believed it was all over! So many I don't think I can remember the amount. I mean I thought I tried ways of killing myself! I always ask myself why do I think like that? Why would I want to hurt myself? Over some petty dummy asss shhh too! It would always be over guys! My low self-esteem stage, I would call it! And that's where the "new me" comes in.

Being in here is what made me realize the "new me" too! I mean, I'm not completely new yet, but in my mind I am! The "new me," would be when I get out and do what my mind tells me to do! Because it's one thing to say and think how you wanna change, but doing it is another, ya feel me? Nah? Some advice to the "new me" from the "half old me" is just stay. Don't let no one bring you down and tell you you can't do something! Don't let the evil become a part of you, especially over no guy! Do what you got to do in life and the guy will just tag along with it, somehow!

-New Me

From The Beat: Yeah, we feel it. And it does sound like you're getting your self esteem in order. For sure, do not go to pieces over a guy. You seem to be one of the fortunate ones who finds the experience of incarceration to have been helpful. When you get to the outs, write to us. We'd like to know how it's going. Our address is on the topic sheet, and, on the inside of The Beat.

It Could Have Been Me

What's good with you Beat? It's your girl Juicy. Man, honestly, there was this one time when I was like fifteen years old. I'd tried out for the cheerleading team and I made it, but they didn't put me in front line. They put me in the second line just because I got meat on me. And I was upset because I only tried out to be in front. Throughout my years I was always in the front line. Since I was in third grade I was on the cheerleading team, and I was in front. But for my 11th grade, they put me in second line. I was highly upset, because if I'm not in front line then I'm not going to be on the team at all. So I quit. But I always went to see their performances, and the girl in the front got all the fame and stuff. I said too myself "it could have been me!"

-Juicy

From The Beat: Had you stuck with it, it might have been you. You never know.

To The One We Miss Love and Never Forget

Hey what up Beat reader's it's your girl Princess Davinna coming at you guys one more time. Well, the topics are not getting my attention, so, I'm going to write about what's on my mind

Life is a gift, so don't put it to waste. Show your loved ones you love them by not catching another case.

The second, hour, or day is not promised to you, so be careful and watch what you do.

Just lost a loved one, got hit by a car, took his life, eight year old youngsta, didn't get too far. All I could ask was why? But we know he's shining down on us from heaven, like so many we lost along the way. We will see him in paradise. He'll be waiting for us right there by the gate.

Time's running out. So I wanna say: we love, miss and will never forget you, and it will stay that way, always. In loving memory of Isais Munoz. We love you.

-Davinna

From The Beat: We are very sorry for your loss. It sounds like his family is in great need of help. We hope you take your own advice. Don't get a second case. Get out and help make the world a better place.

Shhh, Who Cares?

Who cares? Nobody cares if you really think about it. Your man/lady don't, 'cause they will write you and say one thing and do the opposite. The only ones who are kinda there are your family, and sometimes they ain't even there. So screw it. Who cares - just do what you gonna do. In the end, ain't nobody gonna care about your decisions and being locked up but yourself.

-Lil' Travi

From The Beat: We doubt that you're right, but let's say that you are. Isn't that all the more reason to shape up? If it's just you and your brain and your heart that will get you through the world, what kind of trip do you want to take? And where do you want it to lead you? If it's up to you and you alone, unless you enjoy being incarcerated, you'd better start working on yourself.

Put It To Sleep

The one word I would put to sleep is 'blud'. Uhh, that word hella irritates me. Everyone says it like it's the thing to do. Like they say "sup blud, wats braccin blud". It's so F'IN ANNOYING! I mean the actual word 'blood' doesn't annoy me, but….. Well, this is my last time writing in The Beat. So everyone stay up and just do your time and get out.

-Fame

From The Beat: We like you, but we don't want to see you back here, either. Do good. Be well. We've enjoyed your company.

Who cares – Who cares

There so many things going on in the world but just something I just ain't ready for, but it was a rainy night and I just got a phone call and it was my little cousin and he called my phone and said, "what is there to live for?"

I told him to call me back because I am busy and he said ok and then I got another phone call later that night and it was my Aunt and she said my cousin hung himself. Some things I just ain't ready for, the end.

-Ving Nasty

From The Beat: We're very sorry to hear about your cousin. You deliver a painful story. We're so sorry your cousin selfishly took his life. What could you have done for your cousin if he wasn't honest with himself?

You See Me!

you see my style, you see a thugette
you see me always with a girl by my side
I ain't no playa, but people think I am
but…you look into my eyes
you see a girl that's sad,
a girl that just wants someone to listen to me
you see someone tired of getting judged
tired of criticism
tired of getting judged
tired of people thinking they know me,
looking at me like I'm going to do something to you
stop judging me 'cause you really don't know me
sometimes I don't know me, but it's ok,
I'm slowly finding myself lil' by lil' everyday
and I bet you are too
in life it takes one sec to judge someone
just a glance
just be yourself if everyone else you be you be,
you know that's a cupcake with no frosting.

-Cupcake

From The Beat: There's a lot of heart and honesty in this piece that's a lot different than the pieces where you are trying to be hard. It's good to be working on the process of finding yourself – and writing really seems to help you express yourself.

So Who Cares

Who cares about what's going on in our lives?
Who cares about husbands beating their wives?
Who cares about people getting killed?
Who cares about how their family feels?
Who cares about all the lost kids?
Who cares where your dead child is?
Who cares about the people who get robbed?
Who cares about people without a job?
Well, I care 'cause I care about the world, because we all belong to one person: The Lord. So I care about everyone who thinks no one cares.
So don't think that there ain't no one there.

-Skull Head

From The Beat: As usual, you've come through with a positive rhyme for The Beat. We think the message here that you not only care, but want other people to believe in spirituality is beautiful.

A Cold And Wintry Tale

Let me tell you my cold and wintry tale.
I was in my room
and it was cold as hell.
It's winter in my room
while it's summer outside.
Vent blowing like a blizzard
up in my eyes (one eye cuddie)
and all through my body
I could feel the cold
Boogers running down
all through my nose…
Then it got so cold
that I died of hypothermia,
gone in the wind.

-Tiny Samoa

From The Beat: Damn! Now THAT'S cold! (We really like the image of winter in your room while summer warms the outside. Makes us want to get out…)

Who Cares?

Well I don't think anyone really cares anymore, especially not the politicians because they see it like this: the more gangs fight, the more jails they got; to make the more jails, the more taxes that they collect and the more taxes and jails equals more job opportunities for their so-called army veterans. But really there's not really many different races in the army except for white people and that's just the majority of them, that's why I say that. And plus on top of that, I think that the state is just one big gang itself that runs everything because it was the first gang. This whole world is corrupted, so damn it.

-Young And Frustrated

From The Beat: We think you are right to recognize how connected everything is. It is not just the cops or the politicians or the veterans – it is the whole system twisted together that creates the issues you are dealing with. You are right, the state is kind of like a gang. But what do you think the solution is? Anarchy?

We're all doing time

Don't matter if we are incarcerated to do time. The biggest prison in everybody's life is our minds. People think by getting released, that they are free. But the truth is that a person has to get free from inside before being free from anything else in life.

-Chino

From The Beat: What a great point. So, how does someone get free from inside? Free from all the tricks one plays on oneself?

Helping Our Youth

Our youth look up to us and it is our responsibility to steer them in the right direction. I live with my two little nephews that my mom had to take from my sister because she wouldn't be responsible for them. I just did my own thing and got locked up not thinking on how it would affect them. When I got out I wasn't happy because I heard that they were trying to imitate some of the things I was doing. I couldn't imagine them behind these walls going through what I went through. So, I took it into my own hands to make sure that happens. I started paying more attention to them and did my best to be a positive influence in their life. Since then I've seen a big change in their life and I'm proud to be a part of that.

-Bobblehead

From The Beat: We think we don't really take responsibility for our actions until we take responsibility for other people in the world. You seem to have made that realization. How do you plan to continue to be a positive influence in their lives?

Who Cares?

The only thing I can think about this topic is like someone saying: "who cares?" about my son. So all I got to say is that I care about him, even if I'm not there or if I haven't been there.

All I want to say is when I'm out I'm gonna see him again after a whole year. So yeah, that's all I have to say and that my son will grow up to be just like me in every single way.

So I just wanna let my baby's mamma know that I will be there for my son when I'm out, to make up for that time I wasn't there. So, I guess I missed one whole year but I guess I will make it up. Late, I'm out!!!

-Dough Boy

From The Beat: How will your son grow up to be just like you if you haven't been around? What qualities of your own would you like to see your son have to make him just like you? We suspect that your un-caring exterior front is all show – and the dedication to being there for your son proves that point.

Summer

What up Beat. It's James from the max and instead of wishing for a cool day this summer I wish it was warm because the hall is really cold. So turn up the heat. Late.

-James

From The Beat: If you don't like a cold hall, stay out of it! You made the choices that led you to this cold place, so it's up to you to make the choices that keep you home and warm. (Next time, James, don't write on three topics because you cheat us by doing that. We get only one or two sentences on each topic, and you can't see anything of importance in one or two sentences. Next time you write, choose just one topic to focus on, and write a lot more about it.)

The Last Time It Snowed

I remember the last time it got cold enough to snow. It dropped below freezing that night I don't remember the day though, but anyways. I was kicking it with one of my homies. We went out earlier that day and bought some acid by the time it was night it was already getting cold and we were already frying.

I've done it before so I dropped five tabs, my homie had never done it so he only did two. We were out on my porch smoking stogs and we decided to go for a walk it was already like thirty degrees and we both went out in nothing but short sleeve shirts and shorts, we didn't care or even notice how cold it was we walked around my block about fifty times and some how we ended up at the high school.

While we were there we noticed that the gate to the golf carts was unlocked. One thing led to another and we ended up taking the golf carts and doing doughnuts on the base ball field. We were both in the middle of the field playing bumper cars with the carts when two rollers came up on us, and we both get out of the carts and book it hopping through unknown back yards. We hop about six or seven fences and get to my street and we both run as fast as we can to my house and right as we run down my driveway the rollers drive right by us.

Without even a second look we both jump into the bushes to our right we stay there for maybe twenty-minutes. As were sitting there, the rollers stop right in front of the house, and my homie is tripping out saying "were going to get caught were going to get caught." I try to calm him down saying that we were okay and that it's going to be all good. By the time to cop leaves I got him to calm down. And we go to my porch and we have a victory stoge. By now it's like three or four in the morning. And we are being a little loud my mom comes out and yells at us and I tell her I'm sorry and it's cause Im fried. She just calls me an idiot and slams the door.

From that on I don't really remember what happened. The last thing I remember was waking up back at the school and my homies was on the roof. But yeah I ended up getting sick and throwing-up for weeks after that.

-The Real Worm

From The Beat: Sounds like this story would be better told if you weren't locked up or if you had a great life already. Stories of silly stuff we've done is best saved for days when we're living the life we have always wanted. Why don't you take this time to tell stories of how you will be one day?

Life

What is life? Life is like a big obstacle trying to slow you down and every time you think you gotin past it, its gonna come around and tackle you to the damn ground.

What is friends? Friends are people you think are your friends out there really your enemies with secret identities to disguise and hide their true colors. So when you think you close enough to be brothers they wanna come back and cut your throat when you aint looking.

What is money? Money is what makes a man act funny. Money is the root of all evil. Money makes friends come back around and swear like the neighbors were always down.

What is life I'm tired of life I'm tired of all these staff telling fibs. I'm tired of Ms. R saying "it is what it is." I'm tired of Mr. H hating on me and I don't no what I did. I'm tired of Mr. C taking up our time cuss he preaching and shhh. I'm tired of Ms. S running off with the lip. I'm tired of all my roommates thinking they know how to rap. I'm tired of Mr. R saying "I heard that." I'm tired of staff thinking we talking toys. I'm tired of Mr. Y saying "who made that noise." I'm tired of Ms. T saying "slow your role."

I'm tired of using plastic silver ware. I'm tired of not being a millionaire. But if I had a million dollars I buy a dam brewery and turn the planet into alcoholics.

If I had one wish I'd ask for a big enough ass for the whole world to kiss.

If I had a million bucks it wouldn't be enough 'cause I'd still be out robbing all the trucks.

-Gumbie

From The Beat: You write clever sentences: they rhyme and make specific points. If you're so tired of all the people and problems of being in the hall, than why not write about what you are going to do to make sure you never have to see Mr. H again or use plastic silverware? Wishing for a brewery and a big a– doesn't show you to be serious enough to not come back here again!

Back

Damn they release me from here in June second, after doin four-months. Then on July tenth they brought me back for burglary that happened in December. Man that's hella shady business, but I'm gonna do my sixty-days EMP when they let me out on August ninth. Dam no more wake-and-bake drinking, or cocaine that sucks.

Now they got an upgraded system and building a new DNA building that's busting hella people for old stuff in the past damn never goin to beat this messed up system.

To all you that's getting caught up for dirt you thought got away with keep your head up and stay up Peace!

-Shadow

From The Beat: You make a great point, everyone is likely to get caught one way or another. People who make business deals hoping not to get caught are likely to go out of business one day. This is the same for a person who make deals with his/her life (just trying not to get caught) means your life will go out of business one day.

Life through my eyes

Life through my bloodshot eyes
Would scare a square to death
Poverty, murder, violence
And never a moment to rest
Fun and games are few
But treasured life gold to me
'Cause I realize I must return
To my spot in poverty
But mock my words when I say
My heart will not exist
Unless my destiny comes through
And puts an end to all of this

-Smiley

From The Beat: Profound point. When you return to your spot, what will you do so that your heart can be truly free. Sure we have to start from where we are, but it sounds like you have thought carefully about that spot in poverty and you want more. When you get out, how are you going to transform your life so that your heart can be free? Can't wait for life to transform you, right?

Happy Birthday

Hey sis: You on the outs, celebratin' your birthday this 19th. Hope you have a good one! See, me and my sister used to be so close but somehow we lost our communication. I got a GF and it was lost – our communication. I got a GF and it was only about her.

We broke up a long-ass time ago and she hurt me bad. I started going out with some friends smoking/ drinking and soon I wouldn't even be home. I lost my family, well our communication. I'm sorry, you guys. Whenever you wanted to help me, to try to understand me – I would just push all you guys away.

Once I get out I'm going to be different.

See Ma, I'll make it up for you on your b-day. G-flo, we have to hang out more. Silk (daddy), let's go fishing and Mama I just want to hug you. I love all you guys and once your Pearl comes home, she's staying home. I'm the baby of the family – they call me their pearl because they all love me and protect me no matter what. Thank you. Familia te quiero muchos besitos (I love you family, lots of kisses). Happy Birthday Crystal, hope you have a good one. Wit an X and an O – yo' gurl cupcake gots to go.

-Cupcake

From The Beat: Another really honest piece! You're on a roll, Cupcake. We think losing closeness with one's family over a girlfriend or boyfriend happens to a lot of people – no matter if they are young or old, but you are really trying to right that wrong and we're sure your family can't wait to make up that connection.

Snow Story

The first time I went to the snow was about a year ago, with my ex-boyfriend Joe. I had so much fun. It was hard to walk in! I was so cold! But after a while it got hot from running around my ex man's family. It was for Christmas. I was really shy, but everyone was so welcoming and nice.

One of my close cousins pushed me into the snow and it was really funny. When I came up, they were gone. Ha ha. Even though that guy isn't in my life anymore he's still my best friend and I love him so much. Wherever he is - much love.

-Giggles

From The Beat: Get out Giggles. Go back to the snow and have some fun. Get serious about your life. Believe it or not, that's when the real fun begins.

Who Cares?

Who cares? I care about my mom and dad. They care about me. But I really don't care what happens to my life from this point. Because I'm in here and I don't know when I am getting out. I don't care that I might not see my own bed for a while. I don't care that I am locked up and might go to county and then the pen. I don't care that this might be my last time ever being alive to pour out my feelings into the Beat Within. I just don't care!

-C

From The Beat: If you really care about your mom and dad, then you must care about yourself and your life! If you don't, you're telling your parents that they are fools for caring, and we know that isn't true. Don't make the (common) mistake of thinking that the way you feel at this moment is the way you will always feel, or that the way your life is at this moment is the way it will always be. Even though you write that you don't care, we can tell by your writing that you do — and wherever you are, The Beat is always open for you to express yourself in.

My Baby's Mom

Yeah, I got sentenced to the ranch on Tuesday. Hopefully I get to see my daughter over there, 'cause today I'm pretty sure my baby's mom was being a jerk, and didn't let my mom bring her, so I didn't get to see her. So you know what I say about my baby's mom… Late Beat.

-James

From The Beat: We wish you had thought more about your daughter, and how much she needs a father, before you did whatever it was that you thought was more important than her.

Who Cares

Who cares if I'm locked up?
Who cares that I'm going to placement?
Who cares if I got 18 months?
Who cares about my suffering?
Who cares if I do my time?
Who cares if I run?
Who cares I haven't laughed in three days?
Who cares if I'm not happy?
Who cares that I'm a wicked clown?
Who cares if I'm loved?
Who cares that I'm always going to be a "G"?
Who cares if I ever finish high school?
Who cares?
I care that you'll be there…

-Payasa

From The Beat: These are actually really strong questions that we bet many of the other Beaters are often thinking about. It paints a portrait of what is going on with you and that makes it touching and memorable. At the end of the day, you should care about yourself.

Who Cares?

I do about my family and my baby. But not my baby's mom. All my homies know I don't like her at all. Especially my homie I got locked up with. He knows what I care about and what I don't. So that's my story for today. So late Beat.

-James

From The Beat: We're sure you care about your baby, but we're also sure that you weren't thinking about her when you selfishly gave the system the power it needed to remove you from her life. Next time, we hope you (and your baby's mom) put your child and her needs above you and yours.

Harsh Word

Just one word
Put it away
Put it to sleep
One word that I don't want to keep
The word bitch
Is a kind of word that gets you a stitch
So for y'all's recognition
A female dog is the definition
It's a harsh word that none should use
'Cause that's the kind of word that blows my fuse
Then y'all be duckin' like daffy when I be loadin' my clips in
Pa-Pa-Pa
How you wish that I'm missin'
Now who's dissin'
So keep this word out your mouth
'Cause this the kind of shhh that puts you underground.

-Strictly Family

From The Beat: Hmmm, your rhymes are great and funny – but we're not sure threatening to kill people for using the word is exactly the most positive way to encourage a change.

Does Anyone Care?

The only people in this world that I could think of that really care about me is my loving family, my homies and my lady. Who would care for me when I'm locked up anyway? My family and lady would look out for me when I'm locked up and my homeboys would check up on my family. I'm thinking if there's ever anyone in this world who doesn't have anyone caring or showing love to them, there's really no point of living really.

Everyone needs love here, and without that I say "F" the world! But always remember there's always someone out there that cares for you even if you think there isn't.

A'ight then Beat, I'm out, lates!

-Viet Ox

From The Beat: The one person you left off your list of those who care (and we hope it was just an oversight) is you! If you really care for yourself, you'll do what you can to restore your life of freedom, and then change the way you live so you can hold onto it — and give your loving family the gift they want most and deserve... you!

Snow In San Jose

What up Beat! I'm still here chillin in the max. Tonight I'm going to write about a time that it snowed in San Jose. I was on my way to drop off some Ddoja. It was raining hella hard. The next thing I knew it was snowing. That shhh was crazy. It only snowed for like five minutes, but it did. That is one of my snow memories. Until next time Beat.

-Skyler

From The Beat: When things happen unexpectedly, you get a shock of your life. Do you think it will ever snow again in San Jose?

Lets See Who Cares

Q-vole Beat? It's the one and only Chuccy. I'm about to write about "Who Cares?"
The judge don't care.
The system doesn't look at me and care
For them to care would be rare
They just wanna keep me locked up in here
And my name drifts from one ear through the other ear
It's not even close for me to get out
Incarceration punishment what's it all about
My thoughts are killed when I hear the door click
It's just the nasty food and some ugly chick
Every day I go through the same old stuff
And everyone walks around acting tough
Always got a mean threatening mug
I think to myself "Just another wannabe thug"
We only get to see our parents 30 mins. a day
All I could put together is why does it gotta be this way
But on the other side they just don't care
Who cares?

-Chuccy

From The Beat: You've done a good job of telling us who doesn't care, but not who does care. If you already know that the system doesn't care about you, then when are you going to start caring about yourself — enough to stay out of here! Hopefully now, 'cause you are too smart to be sucked up into this system.

Need To Listen

What up Beat, it's your boy Knuckles coming from the Max. Well, today I'm going to write about people who care about me. Well as my family goes they aint talking to me because they told me to stay out of the streets but I didn't listen. It got me here without a visit.

It sucks not having the support from your family. I would never have been here if foo's keep their mouth shut. My family wouldn't be hurting right now but I just got to stay on my feet. To me it seems I'm getting lots of love from the outs but just not getting a letter from a family members hurt. My homeboys show me more love and the mamas too. I just can't wait to get out and chill. Con todo mi alma y Corazon take care to all.

-Knuckles

From The Beat: Your family tried to warn you but you just didn't listen. Your in there not because them "foo's" didn't keep their mouth shut, your in there because you made a wrong choice. What's more important, your family or your friends?

Rude Boy Part #1

What's good wit you?

Well it's Rude Boy writin' to The Beat.

Posted in Juvi lightweight stressing 'cause they chargin me as an adult.

My mom and my squad are tryin' to get the money for my bail but it's not going good.

My girl keeps me in a good mood ya mean, feels good to receive a letter.

It sucks to see my patnas in here going down for life due to somebody having slippery lips.

They moved me from one unit, I miss my two favorite movies up there, "Lilo and Stitch", and the movie, "Boxer".

Well I'm gonna do it wigglin', until then I'm in the max goin' stewie.

-Edgar

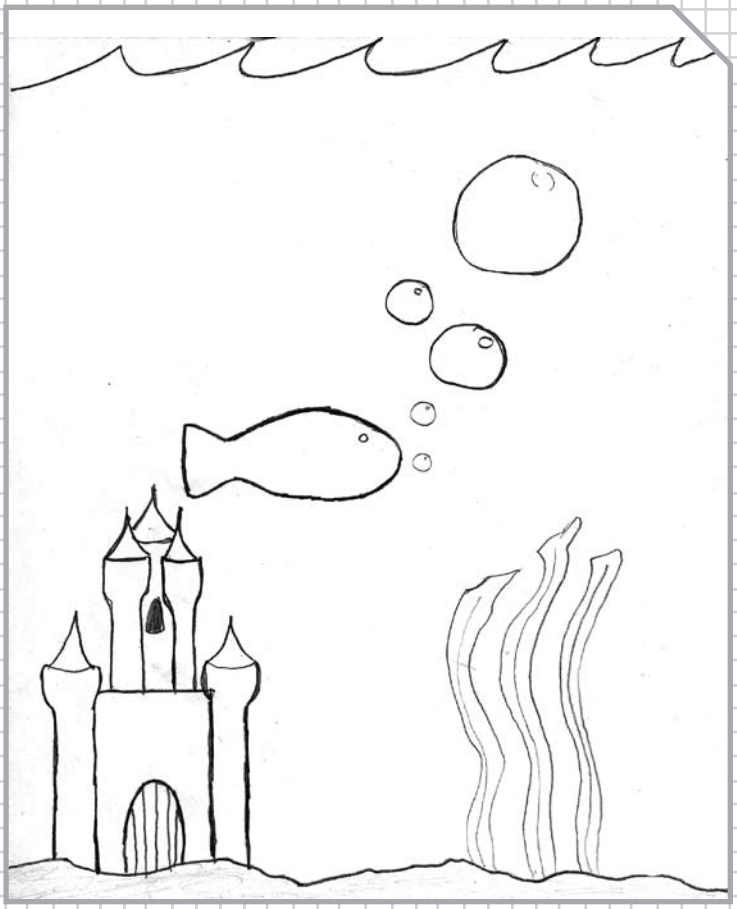
From The Beat: We can only imagine the stress and struggle you are experiencing. As long as you got the family by your side, all will be well. The best of luck to you on your journey and we wish you the best on your next stop. Now we encourage yo uto use this paper to help others see this is not the road to be on! Teach The Beat readers!!!

Trust

What do we all know about trust?
What can trust mean to you?
Well, trust can go along way.
We have trust in a lot of people
for example God, Parents, close friends, and who ever
we have relationships with.
To earn trust you got to prove
to someone that you can help them and let them know
your going to be there for them.
Trust is something that everyone can't live with out in
life. We take it seriously
as something everyone can't live life with out.
Trust goes along with our relationship;
a relationship is nothing but trust.
We got to trust in God
to help us through life,
and to know He will always be there for us.
We trust friends but once the trust is gone
you don't tell them anything, and can't have a
relationship with them once you lose trust.
I think trust is a big thing in life
'cause without trust there's no relationships and no
love. Everyone thinks love is just by loving
but you can't love anyone if you don't have trust.
You gotta give everything to trust in love,
so when you think about trust
– know that trust is everything.

-Stephanie

From The Beat: Stephanie it almost sounds like you have been betrayed with the trust you have put into someone or perhaps more then one person. Trust is a hard thing to give and to receive, but as you stated once that trust is broken it is very hard to get back. We at The Beat hope you get the trust back that you have lost from the ones you love. Never give up Stephanie, hold to your faith and all that you love.



Who cares? Who cares?

Who cares? I don't know.
If they cared would I no?
How would they show me if they cared?
What would they tell me if they were there,
how would they tell me if they were there to show me
they cared? I do not know. Because who cares?

-Fabian

From The Beat: Fabian despite what you may feel or think, there are people out there that truly care for you. A father, a mother, or your siblings, they do care. Some times it is hard for people to express that they care, especially when they have tried and tried yet get nothing back in return. Take a step forward Fabian, give the one you love a hug and simply say "I Care" it has to start some where why not let it start with you.

Why Love Means Nothing

Love, at some point everyone has heard those three words (I love you) from someone who didn't really mean it, and said it to someone and didn't mean it. So when you find someone who you do love what do you say to express yourself?

-Alpha kid

From The Beat: Before you can love someone you must first take the time to get to know them. Love is not something that can be rushed. If you tell someone you love them just for the sake of getting something, all your going to do is get hurt as well as hurt the other person. Once you do find that true love, it does mean something, and you will find that that simple word will mean every thing in your life.

Put These Words To Sleep

Put away your "Apologize"
"Sorry," sorry is a word that in daily life comes up too many times. We all say it, and don't mean it. Apologize should be shared for those who really mean it. I hear sorry when I don't get napkins at lunch, so when your playing ball and you accidentally hurt someone, what do you say?

-Alpha kid

From The Beat: You are right in the fact that "Apologize should be shared for those who really mean it" Most people say "I'm sorry" when ever something bad happens or when ever they did something bad. It is something that is said from the subconscious, because deep down in side they are sorry. There are very few people who hurt other people for the simple pleasure, but those that do will not say they are sorry or apologize because the subconscious will not let them.

My Day In The Snow

One night me and my sister, and our boyfriends were at a party getting drunk. We decided to go to my boyfriend's house.

He told me to wait 'till he got out of the car, but I decided to get out anyway. Right when I took my first step I fell and slipped in the snow and mud!! O! It was so funny! He said he parked his car on the tarp that's why he told me to wait.

We left to the house, and then I was all wet! I changed and felt better. I will never forget that day.

-Stephanie

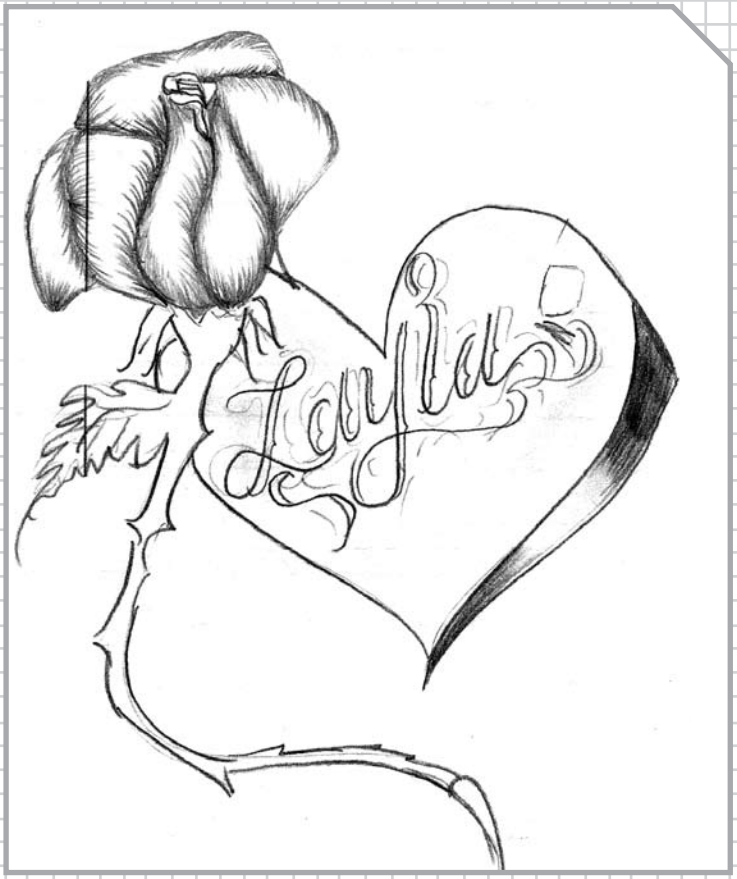
From The Beat: We're sure you will never forget that day, Stephanie. Memories are something we all live with, and some times it's what keeps many of us going through life. If you can put more of a description in your writings, such as; was it snowing, did you have high heals on or tennis, was it cold or warm, was it day or night? Let us hear, feel, smell and see what truly happened that day. There is one thing that disturbed us in this writing, the fact that you and your friends got drunk under age, and then got behind the wheel of a car. Many teens are killing themselves and others buy simply doing what you did, please, please don't drink and drive and don't let your friends drink and drive. We are glad the only bad thing that happened that day was you falling in the snow and mud; keep in mind under age drinking is against the law.

These Words

These words are like balloons.
They go up in the air.
You think you still see them,
but like a trick, they disappear,
and your passion goes out the window.

-Ismaya

From The Beat: Terrific poem. And we know how you feel. Sometimes our words fail us and it feels as if the air has been sucked right out of us.



Who Cares?

Who cares what I think or say? The judge will still try me as an adult. But if I'm lucky enough, if they find me innocent, they will move my case to a court for minors, instead. But oh well, I will leave it up to God. I know he will set me free. But Beat and Beaters, I'm asking you guys to pray for me.

-J

From The Beat: A lot of people care about you, but they want you to start caring about yourself, in a healthy way. We also want you to keep writing poems. We're impressed by the poems you've been sending to us.

Snow In Tahoe

The first time I saw snow was when I went to Lake Tahoe with my family. I was a young teen. It was very fun. My brother and I played in the snow. I would like to go again, but I'm in here, for a long time. But when I get out, I'm planning to go again.

-Juanito

From The Beat: The snow will be waiting for you. In the meantime, concentrate on what you have to do to make sure you don't return to the hall.

Snow

Actually, I have been thinking about cooler weather. What popped into my head was the year I lived in Anchorage, Alaska. It was so beautiful in the summer, but when it came to the winter time, it was cold, but also beautiful. The land was covered in white, fluffy snow. My brother and I would go outside and try to dig snow tunnels, and we'd have snow ball fights with our friends. It was delightful, yes, very delightful. Except for the fact that it was dark most of the time. There were only from three to five hours a day when the sun was out. That was the downfall of snowy winter time in Alaska.

-Megan

From The Beat: Thank you for this story. By the way – do you know why there is no snow in Santa Cruz? It's because snow ball fights in Santa Cruz are illegal.

Who Cares?

Who cares? You wanna know who cares? Nobody. Because we're just juveniles in the hall. The staff don't care about us. They look at us like we're trouble makers. But really, we're not. We just decided to make a bad decision one day. Everybody does, because nobody's perfect. But you really wanna know who cares? We do, and our parents do, too, because truly – they're the only people who know us as well as we do.

BUT then again, I've just asked a staff person if she cares. She responded: Yes,

I do care. That's why I chose this job. I'm here because I care.

-Johnny

From The Beat: Well, there you have it. And we bet that if you ask other folks on the staff, you'll be surprised by the answers. Maybe there are a lot more people who care than you imagine.

Snow

The closest thing to snow is hail, in Santa Cruz. I've never seen real snow because I've never been out of Santa Cruz in my life.

I'm not a person who goes places. I want to, when I'm older. I want to take my little brother, my mom and dad – someday, my whole family. Maybe I'll have to take them one at a time, because it's expensive. I want to go to Canada, where there's lots of snow. I saw hail six inches high, on the ground, but I want to see snow.

-Ismaya

From The Beat: There are some expenses that are worth it, and 'travel' is one. It is important to see how other people live. It is important to see the snow. Take care of your obligations and then, when you have the opportunity, start to explore the world. Take a few small steps. Go to San Francisco for a day. Visit a museum. The world has many wonders. You deserve to see some of them.

Maybe

Nobody to blame but myself.
Nobody tricked me into doing the crime.
But who knows, maybe that was my destiny.
Right now I wish I was smoke, so I could vanish from here.
I'd like to have some scissors that could cut through this cage.
I want to be free. But again, who knows ....
maybe out of my story I could make a book.

-Jose

From The Beat: Yes, maybe you could. Would you like us to get you a journal? If you made a commitment to write in it everyday, it wouldn't take too long to write that book.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Put It To Sleep

If I were to put some words to sleep, I would put "wetback," "beaner," and "FOB" to sleep. The reason I would put "wetback" to sleep, because every time I hear that word, I get offended and hurt. Also, it gets me hella mad, that I would take off on someone.

I feel the exact same way about "beaner," because when they say that word, it offends my race and who I am.

Also, I would bury the word "FOB," meaning "fresh off the border." I hate this word, because some of my family really did sneak in the USA and hearing that word hurts me and my family.

-Chris

From The Beat: We're very glad you laid this out so directly, Chris, because people who use these words often think they are harmless when they can hurt very much. When you examine yourself, are there words that you use to describe others that might be just as offensive to them? If so, we hope you'll think about burying those words too.

Who Cares?

My parents care and so do my siblings. I have cousins that tell me, "Family comes first," but I don't think so... I think family is who you choose, because I have cousins done me shady, and my best friend has been down for me since day one. I consider her my cousin more than my real cutty.

The people "who cares" are the ones still there. But, overall, who cares? You never really know, because random people who you never thought about, actually really care.

-G

From The Beat: This short piece is packed with meaningful insights. We agree that the family you choose reflects your real values. But most important of all, the people you choose reveal whether you care about you. We can see that you do.

My Life

My life is not the type of life that you would like to live. Many things that I do, most people cannot do, or even think about. It's real out here in these streets. Man, you have to do a lot of things that you don't want to.

Many of my friends have been shot or killed, and the game has came into my family life. That's why I have not got out the 'hood, 'cause it's got me to the point I got an "I don't give a damn" attitude. Man, it's hard, 'cause I can't go to some places that I want, because the game has rules and I have to follow them.

People think that people can just stop and get out, but, man, that's not the code. To me, I have to keep true to my fam bam and that's what it's got to be, ya feel me? But this is my life and I have to live with style and lots of grit.

-Boss Hog

From The Beat: We can't agree with you that you've "got to do" the things you do, but we absolutely can appreciate why you think so... and we can appreciate how well you put it down for us. Will there ever come a time when what you want for you becomes so powerful that you will make the difficult decisions to extricate yourself from a lifestyle that can only lead to enslavement (or early death)? Of course, it's not fair that all your choices are difficult ones, but knowing that they are, we want to encourage you to take those difficult (and courageous) steps away from the expectations of others, and that give hope for a long and fruitful life, and not the steps that get cut off prematurely in your prime, only to be forgotten as the next "soldier" steps into your role.

I see it as two ways out: school or nothing, and nothing is never good.

What My 'Hood Means To Me?

My 'hood is a place of struggle, mostly Black. I see it as two ways out: school or nothing, and nothing is never good. I feel that most people are intimidated by where I live, so they hate on us and try to make our area "hot" by doing dumb stuff, like shooting, fighting, and robbing, or trying to rob people. I feel my 'hood is home and a safe place to be FOR ME.

There are so many problems on my street, but at the end of the day, it's all about getting inside before dark. Sideshows, turf dancing, and females referred to as "bopps" are our pleasures on da street. We don't look for trouble, but if someone is disrespecting our home, we have to take a stand and have them leave. If not, we usually put guns in the situation and they vanish.

When it comes down to it, Daly City is a wonderful place to be, and I believe that it is not a dangerous place to be. But you must be careful who you talk to and how you do things around there. It is a place of respect and peace.

-Denmark

From The Beat: We appreciate the description of your 'hood, though we're not convinced that disrespecting a place is worth going to war over, or doing much more than shrugging it off. We wonder what the words "free country" mean if there are neighborhoods that some Americans are safe in but others are not. To us, that's just another kind of entrapment, like the trap you're in right now! At the same time, we are in 100% agreement that school is the way out of that trap, and will open doors you can't even imagine until they are presented to you. To benefit from the fruits of schooling, though, you first have to get out of here and find a way to stay out of here. What are you doing to accomplish that?

Man, it's hard, 'cause I can't go to some places that I want, because the game has rules and I have to follow them.

60

At 60
I would be a granddaddy
Chillin' with plenty of money
A retiree
Still sexy
Naw, just kidding about the honies
My old lady would have a heart attack or something

At 60
I want to be free to travel the world
And see Brazil, Egypt, Paris and the seven seas
Best believe, at 60
I'll be full of energy
'Cause, to me, the sixties
Would be the new forties
Plus, nobody want to be old
Or say their real age
I'll hide my wrinkles under a coat
And drink green tea with sage
You know what they say... it reduces your age!

-Tavito

From The Beat: We love that you are able to imagine being that age, and that you have ambitions to see the rest of the world. There's no reason why this vision cannot come true, but what are you doing now to see that it happens? (We hope you don't hide your wrinkles under a coat; they reveal all you've been through.)

I want to be free to travel the world And see Brazil, Egypt, Paris and the seven seas

Bay Slave

Sometimes I feel like a slave
Because I am always worried about what people are going to say
No matter what, it has to be that way
I try to be free from that slave mentality
My rep I struggle to protect
So I drink alcohol to pass any test
A punk I can't be so I act like the rest
When I get in a mess I don't talk to the feds
Can't say I love you from what's under my left chest
I'm a slave in the Bay
Somebody disrespects, I have to spray
Take off, hurt him in the mouth
Lying down in the ground
But, why?
It's one of those slave rules
Like, "Don't snitch," "Don't seem smart"
"Don't cry," "Don't go to church"
Or "...talk at church"
"Don't show feelings for a girl"
And my favorite: "Hurt that guy
For disrespecting or telling you a lie"
I'm a slave in the Bay
I try every day
To change my slave ways
I want to be an independent person
That don't worry about what people going to say
When they see me doing good things
Working, going to church, and staying clean
I don't want to hurt others anymore
For my rep to earn support
It's not worth to work as a slave to something
You don't even own

-Tavito

From The Beat: There is so much heart in this fine poem, Tavito. You reveal that internal conflict between what others expect of you and what you want for yourself as a unique individual with your own personal ambitions and hopes for the future. We cannot resolve this conflict. Only you can do that, which is why you're feeling so torn. All we can say is that being enslaved to anything — whether it's the code of the street that you had nothing to do with creating or alcohol or another person — is a denial of your own individual potential and soul. We hope you are able to liberate yourself. If you can do that, you have some God-given gifts that will let you soar.

Who Cares? Who Cares...?

Now, before I got locked up, I had a warrant and everybody cared and didn't want me to go. They used to say, "Oh, I'm a miss you," and "I promise I'll write to you." Now that happened and I'm here like a dumb ass, and ma real ride and die chicks are da only ones who be writing to me. Well, you see, no one else cares... But my mom cares. My family cares.

-Baby Youngsta, San Mateo

From The Beat: Your mom cares. Your family cares. And, most important, you care. Those are powerful allies in your corner. Don't let them down!

Settle Down

I would always run around
Late at night smoked a few pounds
Drink until I hit the ground
Didn't care about my mother's frown
Living life fast like 100 miles per hour
I could not grasp a moment
I had no power
Now I know I'm ready to settle down
Put my priorities first before I party now
Life is long
But I was living like I had a day left
Before I'm gone

-Tavito

From The Beat: We can never know the ingredients in your life that have turned you from an irresponsible young boy into such a thoughtful and deeply feeling young man. Whether it's the birth of your child, your own chronological growth, or something more mysterious and indescribable, we know far too many other young people who will not grow up in time to avoid the life-threatening dangers of the child's world. Whatever the cause, we can see that, as difficult as it will be, you are ready to be a father and a man. Keep inspiring us!

System Is Doing Too Much

Came back just for violating EMP. Was going to just stay and finish my time until July 22, but then, after when I got booked in, something came up and I had fought up in here and got a new charge for battery. Had to go to court just for running up and handling it. I am going to get sent to Girls' Camp. Think that the judge is doing too much. But I am going to sav my time out. I really do care about what is going on, because just sitting here, doing nothing, little girls just getting in trouble for staring at them boys in here. But whatever, I am ready to get on with everything.

-Nemo Baby

From The Beat: Are you "ready to get on with everything" without the need to run up and "handle your business?" You write only that "something came up" and apparently, the only way you know how to handle things when "something comes up" is through a violent attack. Until you rethink that strategy, it won't matter whether you "sav" your time out or not. It's your life. Wouldn't you like to be in control of it? Then take control of your own reactions to the provocations of others, and learn a new way to respond.

If Someone Calls Your Grandma An Offensive Word...?

I wish I can bury the word "Wetback," and "bitch," because the word "Wetback" offends me to the fullest. And "bitch," it hurts me to know that there's people around disrespecting each other by using that word.

Like the example: what if someone called your grandpa a wetback for picking strawberries, and what if they called your mom a bitch for no reason, just because they were mad, and she started crying? How would you feel? So take a second and think, "Am I going to use these words?"

-Chris

From The Beat: We agree with you, Chris. It's so easy to use hurtful words against others but feel offended when those words are used against us. We would be happy if both those words were permanently buried.

Please Help Me, Beat Within

That shiesty Beat Writer is back behind bars
This time on a parole warrant and new charges for stealing cars
Wasn't even free for a week
Now I'm back in jail, catching up on sleep
I've been in the system almost seven years
And I've shed too many tears
I've been able to relinquish some of my fears
But still I can't associate with positive peers
The Beat Within has watched me grow up
And it's helped teach me things I need to know
I just wanna live my life
And get rid of some of this strife
But I just can't seem to start living right
Life's crazy and hella shady
Almost eighteen, grown up... maybe
I can't seem to get a grasp on reality
I'm in a daze
Tryna find my way out this maze
Even though I've fallen, I'm still struggling to reach, to grasp
The hand being held out to me in this class...
I don't wanna sin
Please help me, Beat Within

-Friskie

From The Beat: Yes, Friskie, we have watched you grow up (and not grow up), and it pains us so much to see you back under the control of others because you could not control yourself. What will it take for you to gain that control so that you are not at the mercy of others and of your own emotional outbursts? How will you find the strength within yourself to quietly resist the illegal temptations so many lay before you, and to resist the urge to drown your frustrations in drugs that can only devastate your future? We wish we had the answers to these questions, but they can only come from you. You're almost a grown woman. Take control!

My Brothers Care

I think that at times in my life, no one really cares but my two brothers, T-T and Twon. I think that I can always depend on them for anything. Whether it's money or help with schoolwork, they always got my back. No matter how much trouble I get into, I know that we always got each other. Always love my bras, T-T and Twon.

-Phil

From The Beat: The value of that love cannot be overemphasized. At the same time, all three of you have given far more of your lives to this system that controls your every move than is good for any of you. How can the three of you help each other out of here so that you can continue to help each other throughout your lives, but always on the outs?

Cops Always Harassing

Every time a cop sees me, they always got to harass me, just because of the way I look. They always have to talk smack, just 'cause I'm on probation, saying that I'm a lowlife, saying that I'ma end up in da pen, always tryin' to find a way to mess me up.

-Juan

From The Beat: Unfortunately, there's nothing you (or we) can do about the disrespect some cops routinely express. In the end, you just have to keep your nose clean and keep your chin up — and don't react to their provocations.

Light Through Pain

I want for someone to see my pain, to understand where I come from, when I want to scream, but instead, keep it inside. I get angry, but I hold it back, 'cause I could never hurt someone physically, mentally and emotionally. I try and turn my negative energy into positive energy. Some of the things I do is take a walk, listen to music, separate myself from others, and most importantly, writing.

Another reason I hold all things back is 'cause it makes me feel good inside. I have good friends I know I can talk to and they understand when there are some things I just can't talk 'bout. One thing about me is I know I can get over any problems I have and I'm always willing to help others. I am truly thankful for the things I've been through, 'cause I wouldn't know what I know today and be able to overcome anything else.

-Chocolate Mama

From The Beat: We appreciate the great difficulties you've already overcome and the great hopes you have for a different future. If there's any advice we can give, it would be that when you say you could "never hurt someone physically, mentally and emotionally," the "someone" includes yourself.

Who Cares?

Starting messing up
Everyone worrying about me
Because they cared about me
But I didn't care about me
Stopped eating and started drinking
I thought...
No one cares about me
I was slipping
I was crashing
Who cares now?
Nobody
Then I came in here
Wondering... thinking
Is there anything left for me?
But then I realized
I opened my eyes
I started worrying
I started caring about me

-Closter

From The Beat: Starting to care about yourself is the beginning of an entirely new phase in your life, and one that is bound to pay high dividends in self-satisfaction, accomplishment and freedom.

Get Money

Get money, is what it do
I cain't stand bein' in here
Wastin' a whole lot of time
Fo' a whole lot of nothin'
When I can really be doin'
A whole lot wit' myself
Like, fo' instance
Go to school, go to work, do what I do
Besides being somewhere
Where somebody can always be
Pushin' my buttons
An' takin' me fo' granted
Small fries to a Big Mack like me
Is always in mind
Gettin' money is a motivation
Also a need in lives
Peoples these days
Do what they can
Just to eat

-Tati

From The Beat: The problem with making money the object of your ambitions is that it often leads to places like this. As long as you let others push your buttons, it will be very hard for you to do those things which you correctly see as the key to a decent future, mainly going to school and finding a job. Of course you need money to live, but living under the control of a system does not compare with living under control of yourself.

This Is How I Feel

I been here for seven months
And fifty more days to go
When I get out, I am gonna be eighteen years old
Off probation, my life I am ready to grab ahold
I'm destined to be free from authorities
You're not going to see me in a penitentiary
I got a very young baby to keep clean and raise
Away from gang activities
This is how I feel
I'm ready to be real
No more fake thrills
Buy a home on top of a golden hill
Be away of people that want to kill themselves
Because they bad for my health

-Tavito

From The Beat: Yes, yes, yes. Don't give up on this dream, Tavito. It's not just your own ticket to a decent life, it is also your child's ticket to having a real father, the kind that every child deserves. We know you can do this.

Respect Is The Name Of The Game Of Life

Respect is the name of the game that I choose to play
It's the #1 rule I try to follow every day
I even respect my rivals
Because we the same kind, but just from different barrios
I especially respect people who are older in the game
They got wise brains
I got much respect for ladies
I believe they got it hard when they give birth to babies
I seen more disrespectful people in the streets
Than I seen here
I felt more peace in these juvenile suites than in the streets
Respect was preached in here by Mr. B
I understand why, too, because
When you don't respect anything, you are nothing

-Tavito

From The Beat: We respect you! You are using your brain to think outside the limits that others want to place on you. Once you see how much we all have in common as human beings, then the respect you have for yourself must spill over to others. Not everybody understands this, but you clearly do, and that makes you something (and someone) special.

Follow My Dreams

I'm gonna be eighteen
My dreams I'm ready to reach
In my life I have always been "teached"
That what I want I can be
I know it's not going to be that easy
Along that road
There's going to be a lot of obstacles to challenge my soul
I have always been told
To follow my dreams
But, what they won't say is that that road
Often gets cold
Along that way, I am going to find the real me
Make my dreams
Destiny

-Tavito

From The Beat: It is so refreshing to find a young writer like you who wants to find his own identify amidst all the pressures to be like everyone else. It is one of the rewards of this work when we meet a young man or woman who, for reasons we cannot understand, truly seeks to set himself (or herself) free to be. That is your destiny!

Frustrations

Bloody tears run down my pale cheeks
Why am I forced to witness everyone else's happiness?
Equipped with a gun with no ammunition
I possess a knife too dull to pierce my skin
Always and forever will I search for the proper instruments
To end my eternal frustrations

-Nicky

From The Beat: Your frustrations are "eternal" only in the sense that we all experience frustrations throughout our lives — just as we all experience gratifications throughout our lives. If you read these pages, you'll see that you are not alone in your unhappiness. In a sense, it is part of the definition of adolescence to be unhappy and unfulfilled. Which is just another way to urge you not to judge tomorrow by today. You have "ammunition" that so many others lack, but it is not the ammunition to hurt yourself. It is the ammunition of a good brain, a strong will, and a passionate heart. Those are strengths, not weaknesses. They will work to your benefit, if you let them.

My Brother

I can see it in your eyes
You want to change your life
You tired of those evil lies
And those years spent behind
You cried many cold tears
Put your family's life in fear
Made many enemies
Plenty of rejected accessories
Your gang full of fake homies
Inside you feel like a beast
What you need is to find peace
Yeah, I know it's not easy
And I still struggle to let go
But, my life is worth more
Than to go to waste in this world
I tell you this 'cause you like my brother
Switch it up and I bet you can get another chance

-Tavito

From The Beat: We can only hope that your "brother" feels the love that motivates this poem, and that it makes him take your words seriously. At the same time, we hope you take your own words equally seriously. You are worth it!

My Girl

The only person who I think that cares about me is my girl, because for the last two years that I have been coming in and out of jail, she always waiting for me with open arms. Even when I cheated her with another girl, she still stuck with me.

Every year, when it's my birthday, she's the only one that's remembered my birthday and tries to make that day special. But when it's hers, I forget. But now that I really thought about how much she cares about me, it might be too late. So that's why every time I write to her, I tell her I love her and that I changed now, for the better.

-Maniak

From The Beat: We hope that promise of change isn't just a jailhouse promise, easily broken when you have freedom to make your own choices. There are many ways to "cheat" on those that love you. One way is with another person. But another way is to satisfy your own selfish desires without a thought to her, and therefore giving the system the power to take you from her. In that case, you're cheating yourself at the same time.

At Night

At night
Hold your pillow nice and tight
Fight, don't cry for me
You' too sweet
No more tears running down your cheeks

I also wish
You can be
Next to me
I'll be free
Ready to stay
Out of captivity
Really soon

At night
Just remember
The things we do
The feelin's like
We at a honeymoon
And always know
I'm thinking about you

-Tavito

From The Beat: She is very lucky to have you. You are very lucky to have her. Don't let yourself be taken away from her again!

What Will You Do?

Join me, will you, in this dance of deceit
As I sit here with a gun to my head
Will you be the one to pull the trigger
And end this pathetic play
That no one is attending
Or will you toss me back
Into that concrete jungle?

-Nicky

From The Beat: Who are you addressing in this bitter poem? If you are talking to yourself (as the one with the gun to your head), all we can tell you is that this "pathetic play," as you call it, is only in its first act. Plays are divided into three acts. Don't judge the final act by how the first act plays out.

Requiem

I struggle; she laughs
I fall, and yet she flies
I'm blind, but she can see
I'm deaf, even though she can hear
I'm alive, and the sad thing is
She's dead

-Nicky

From The Beat: Again, Nicky, we have to assume that the living you is speaking to what you think of as the dead you. If that's the case, we can assure you that you are a vibrant living force who is struggling to understand and come to terms with life. Don't give up!

I play with a team in the school. The team is called Strikers and I want to win all the games in the cup like in Mexico. They win all their games.

My Inspiration

When I'm feelin' down
You pick me up from the ground
My heart pounds like crazy
When you come around
My inspiration, I found in you
'Cause when I have you in view
I can make my dreams come true

It's a chain reaction with me and you
'Cause what you do for me I do for you

My reason why I can stand six feet high
Ain't no lies
No second tries
With you at my side everything goes right

-Tavito

From The Beat: We hope this wonderful person can inspire you to stop doing whatever it is that allows the system to separate you from her. You have to choose which is more important to you, the activity that leads you here... or her.

Snow Might Be Fun

I think that if I go to the snow, it will be fun, because I never seen or touched it. When I go, it will be very cold and I might need the right gear to stay warm. The reason that I want to go to the snow is that I want to experience the feel of it.

A time when it was cold enough to snow was when it was a Christmas, and it was really cold and raining. I thought snow would come down any minute. What I think how it feels to play in the snow is that it might be fun, but I know that it's cold and you can freeze to death. That's what I think, for a person that hasn't been to the snow.

-Rodney

From The Beat: You're right, of course. Snow is cold! But it can also be one of the most beautiful sights in the world to see. We hope you manage to stay out of here so that next winter you can find a way to get up to the mountains and experience the feeling of snow.

I Want To Be A Soccer Player

I want to play soccer because I want to be in the TV so my friends can see me play soccer. When I grow big, I want to be a soccer player and win the cup. I want to me the soccer professional players.

I play with a team in the school. The team is called Strikers and I want to win all the games in the cup like in Mexico. They win all their games. And I want to win all the money.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: It's hard to keep your game up if you are locked up! If the old saying is true that "Practice makes perfect," then you need to find a way to stay out there where you can practice every day to become the soccer player you'd like to become. Who is your favorite player? Pele? Beckham? Someone we don't know?

Subhuman

I feel like a human
In a ghost world
No one that I truly connect with
"If only, if only"
The sad boy cries
As he enters the grave
"If only, if only"

-Nicky

From The Beat: It's not true that there's no one you can truly connect with, though it may be true that you haven't found that someone yet. "If only, if only" you make that connection, the world will look different to you, and you will look different to yourself.

Labyrinth

An endless labyrinth
Constructed in the vast
Darkness of my mind
For some odd reason
I am at peace
Nothing can touch me
I've finally reached
A state of Godliness
Minus the affection
And false morals

-Nicky

From The Beat: You know, Nicky, you make us wish you would write a longer piece, perhaps an essay, that fills out some of the mysterious but intriguing allusions you make in these short poems. For example, we'd love for you to tell us what you mean by the "affection" and "false morals" that in your mind often accompany "Godliness."

Another Chance To Stop Running

I am getting out on Monday. I'm going to a group home in Sacramento. I have to be there for six to nine months. I really want to go, because I have another chance to stop running. It is not my first group home, but I look forward to going.

-Tinkerbell

From The Beat: We like your hopeful attitude. Experience tells us that it is what you bring to the program, and not what the program brings to you, that makes the difference between failure and success. Good luck!

I Know They Care

A lot of people in my life care about me. My whole family cares about me for sure, that much I know. They always take care of me and made sure I'm aight. My friends definitely care about me, 'cause right when they found out I was here, they all wrote me.

-Shane

From The Beat: Well, Shane, if all these people care about you, why have you put other things ahead of them and let them down? It's time to realize that having family that cares means you owe them something. It's time for you to sacrifice a few things you love doing and keep yourself with that family that loves you.

To Become A Better Man

I'm gettin' tired of bein' here
Man, you just don't understand
It's like I'm gettin' stepped on
Gettin' crushed like a can
In this new facility
Lookin' like the baby pen
Surrounded by hella people
And a lot I can't stand
An' ma anger turned to liquid
So it's drippin' out ma hand
But I'm still standin' tall
So I gotta thank the man
I just need one more chance
To become da better man
And w'enever they let me go
I ain't comin' back again
I'ma post with the fans
Still doin' the grown man
Take a walk wit' da girls
But I'm not holdin' no hands

-Mr. Unknown

From The Beat: What are you planning to change on the outs that's going to let you keep this promise to never come back? If you "post with the fans," aren't you just putting yourself back in the box? Why won't you hold any girls' hands?

TBW THE BEAT WITHOUT

DWIGHT ABBOTT (SUNMAN'SLIGHT) AND JAMES K.

Dear Dwight

Hey what's up Dwight, how are you doing? Well, my name is James K. and I'm really a fan of yours, since I read you're book, I Cried, You Didn't Listen. I see you have been through a whole lot of your lifetime! You're the craziest white boy I have ever met, or heard about. You were so crazy when you were young. How did you manage to escape all those times you did? Why did you get the life sentences? Was the little girl you ran away with the mother of your son? How did your son get murdered?

Well me, I'm in Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall right now for a homicide and they're trying to give me juvenile for life and I get out when I'm 25. Juvenile hall is much different since your days. There's no sexual things going on here, but it be a lot of fights because of gang violence. I'm from a gang too. I got about six months since I been here and this seems like a walk in the park! Hopefully if I got to (CYA) I make it there alright.

I got a hold to your book by one of my teachers here, Mr. Sanders, and he also read your book several times. The title of your book catch a lot of attention. So are you working on your next book? I have a lot of family that's in prison. Maybe one of them are there with you.

P.S. Stay strong

-James K

We are almost at a loss for words to describe the exchange between James K, a juvenile locked up in Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall in Los Angeles County, and our old friend, Dwight Abbott (SunMan'sLight). It is no small miracle that this young African-American man was so moved by what he read in "I Cried, You Didn't Listen," the remarkable autobiographical story by Mr. Abbott (available through AK Press) of his perilous journey through the California Youth Authority in the 1950s, that he decided to write him a letter. But it is in Abbott's response to James' letter that we see the incredible gifts he possesses — gifts of honesty, of direct talk, of empathy, of sensitivity, and of precious insights and advice that spring from a lifetime of experience, most of it behind bars! For a founding member of a white racist prison gang to begin a letter to a Black boy he does not know by apologizing for the ignorance of his own early racism is... well, like we said, we are at a loss for words to express how deeply moving this is! We're grateful that Mr. Abbott continues to share his "Light" from Salinas Valley State Prison with The Beat.

I'm really a fan of yours, since I read you're book, I Cried, You Didn't Listen... You're the craziest white boy I have ever met, or heard about.

My Respects, Sir

Man, did the return address on the envelope in which you mailed your letter jar back memories. I was there in Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall when I was much too young to be so troubled. Is it still surrounded by bleached walls, or have they since torn it down and started over? I was there only once, and all the other times I was placed into "Central." I wonder if Central's brick buildings still stand, surrounded by a wall that kept it so well hidden?

So, you think I have been through a lot in my life? Maybe so, but I know for a fact you and yours have been through hell just because you are Black, and the first thing I want to tell you is sorry for all the ignorance in this world, especially what was once my own. Hope we all get it right sooner than later.

How are you doing James? Is that a rhetorical question, or what? Of course things are not going well in your life, not right now, but it can change. Obviously, you know that and are trying to find a way to make it happen, or you would not have read my book, and then wrote me a letter afterward. I am grateful that you have done both, and I hope Mr. Sanders shares it with the other boys there, and that they will write — if for no other reason than just to tell me they read "I Cried, You Didn't Listen." Let them know that, will you home boy? Thank you.

I'm figuring you're thinking your troubles are picking up speed, like a frikking roller coaster going down hill out of control; if things don't get slowed real soon it's going to fly off the tracks? Am I anywhere close? Matter of fact, you may be thinking, wrongly, that you can't stop it? Been there, done that. Can I give you a small piece of advice, or are you sick of being "advised?" I know I was. Every time an adult wanted to tell me he or she "understands" what I was going through, what I am "feeling," and was going to give me "the answer," I wanted to frikking puke.

Hey, I'll risk it and ask you to give it a moment, or more, of your consideration. Respectfully, I strongly suggest you don't look for the answers in us "adults" because we don't have them. We want you to think we do, our intentions honorable, and sort of figure we can't make things any worse for you once you are locked down tight as a frog's butt — water tight! Understand what I'm saying?

Reality is, we can do nothing more than guide and advise. But when all is said and done, it is the choices you, and only you, make that will decide your future, what your life is going to be about — in your case possibly after 25 years of age, which will leave you, by my calculations, another 60 years I don't think you want to live in my house.

"Then where the hell are the answers I need, my options, if you guys don't have them?"

Look into yourself, Lil' Bro', and you will find them. Hear what your common sense, and your "gut" has to say whenever you are faced with making a choice, and it will always be loyal; never will it lie to you. It will tell you if the choice you are considering is the right or the wrong one, and from there it's up to you. Nobody else can do it for you.

First, there is something you must go out and get — take — something that if you do not have, you will always risk failure no matter what your choices are, in my humble opinion. Listen up, brother.

I know what you are looking at ain't cool, that it "seems" like your entire life, but the reality is it is but a few years (I have no idea how old you are) which you can use to your advantage, in spite of what "the system" is going to throw at you, wherever you go — or do not go.

What if I told you that what you are facing can become the blessing, though presently disguised, you have been looking for, that you can make it be so?

"This old man is straight-up crazy," you are thinking?

Say the worst happens, you go to CYA. Keep it straight there don't catch another case, and you know you will be 25, good chance younger, when the man lets you walk. (Keep in mind, it is not written in stone that you must be kept there until your 25th birthday.) The only thing for sure "written in stone" is your behavior and successes will be primary factors considered when the Parole Board meets on your case. That's the worst.

Now, sorry about building up the suspense: what I wish I had done when I was in the same, exact, situation as you are right now, most likely the same age, was get the education that I have today. I am convinced had I done so, I would never have afterward again been incarcerated. What if you choose to do with your "time" what I did not do?

Though I was convinced otherwise "back in the day," I now know all the things I suffered through were 'incidents' I could have eventually put behind me. Today, I also know odds were big time against me "making it" no matter what I did, that I was doomed to fail myself, because I was "illiterate" — a dumb, stupid kid, with a goon mentality who could hardly read and write.

I was so ignorant, even had someone handed me "all the answers" on a gold platter, I could not have put most of them to work for me.

James, what I am doing a poor job of saying is, if you have to go where they are trying to send you, stand up among your peers and be your own person. Don't let the shot caller dictate what your program is going to be. No gangbanging, get all of your education, at very least a High School Diploma, preferably both High School and College, get a couple of vocations under your belt, and when you leave there determined never to return, you never will! I promise you that, on my skin.

There are absolutely no guarantees in life, but you do the above and your chances of leaving there before you are 25 become very good. But let's say you do not get out before then: think of what you have gained and what it will do for the long life you have left ahead of you. What would you say that will be — at least 60 years? I don't think you want to do that in my house, James.

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Go, do what you have to do, do it right, and you will not be incarcerated 46 years, serving four consecutive life sentences in a 4x10 foot cell, no hope of ever being free, living among a large number of back-stabbing homies who have no idea what "honor" among us should be.

The "old school ways" no longer exist, and even when they did, they were not "all that." There is no glory in these pits, as no doubt those around you are trying to say there is, how "cool" it all is. Facts are, it's dog eat dog, who gets to the man to rat first without anybody seeing, who can be the biggest bully.

I'm being straight with you, James. Believe it or not, I do have other things I could be doing, so I won't waste this time, mine and yours, by feeding you a bunch of B.S. If you decide not to listen, what will be your "reward" for being "stand-up" for the homies? For sure, a time will come when you will be the only one who remembers you are in prison.

I know you didn't write to hear me 'preach'; no doubt you get enough of that right where you are at; I know I did. Just needed to shout that out before going on with answering your many questions in the order you have written them.

Thank you for asking about the best friend I have ever had in my life, Stubby. Soon after my book was published, I received a letter from a "retired homicide detective," suggesting I telephone him… if Stubby's real name was Donald Lee Stubblefield." I did not want to make that call, procrastinated, and it was several weeks before I did.

Stubby's nude body had been discovered laying in a field, hidden by tall sticker weeds, northwest of Lodi, Ca. "The murder investigation" revealed he was raped, beaten, stabbed, and strangled, "most likely the same day" we were released from Tracy (DVI).

For me, it would become obvious he had decided on his way home, using "home" loosely, he could not handle even one more day with the father who had beaten him his entire life. Obviously, Stubby got off the bus at Lodi, it's first stop. Very soon, what he and I had battled so long and hard to keep from happening, happened to him in a world that can be as sick and sicker as the one I have lived my entire life inside of.

I know, just know, as he was traveling in a "northeast" direction immediately outside of Lodi, he was headed for Redding, Ca. He knew my parents loved him as much as I do, and were there beside me waiting for his telephone call. (By the way, "Preston" is directly outside of Lodi. Twice after escaping, Stubby and I went through that town headed for Redding.)

Why he did not telephone as we planned for when he arrived at his father's house, I cannot say. He had to know it did not matter where he telephoned from, to just do it. For sure he knew my parents loved him and were waiting to drive to Susanville (where his parents had moved while he was incarcerated), and take him to be with me in our home. The more I have thought about it, the more convinced I have become it's very possible he intended to "show Sonny" he could do some things on his own without my help, bless him; maybe wanted to 'surprise' me. I just don't know, never will.

Upon my arrival home, after a walk around the property and a cleansing dip in Still Water Creek, I was never more than a room away from the phone for the next week. I telephoned his house at which time his father told me Stubby "was not on the bus when it arrived at the Susanville station." I knew then he was dead, just never listened to myself about it.

It has been a rare day since I have not thought about him, our time together, the love we so unconditionally gave one another, the love I have never been ashamed of. I have never, cannot, stopped loving him, and I have never since loved anyone as intensely. Had I needed to die for him, it would have felt like the most natural thing for me to do. I think you would have like him, James. Didn't have room in him to hate, no matter what was done to him.

Have you yet concluded I am a looooong winded SOB? I am! I do tend to 'go on,' but it's all on the real, about things I know from personal experience. I am not that fat-cat who enters the facility, silk suit, gold watch, telling you "I understand," when in fact he has no idea whatsoever what he is talking about. Ever run into those idiots? Most mean well, I think, but when I was a kid forced to sit and listen to some "speaker," I always felt like he was talking down to me, so I quit paying attention.

I told the FBI I was 32 so I would not be taken to a juvenile hall. I'd had enough of those places.

I was originally arrested on "suspicion" of murdering three gang bangers, shot callers, who had two kids, 13 and 14-year-olds, that I was working with to get them out of the situation they had been forced into. Both had been threatened, were being forced to break into houses and to give the booty to the shot callers. In return, the kids was being given crystal meth.

I asked them, the adults, to back off, let the kids go on their way, and was told to "take it somewhere else." When the dust settled, they were no longer among us.

In the end, I was not convicted of those charges. Instead I was convicted of "Child Endangerment" (had "minor" children in my house where there were dangerous weapons, guns); "Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor"(having illegal drugs in a house with minors present); "Possession of drugs with intent to sell" (the thirteen-year-old was caught with a nearly three quarter pound bag of crystal meth, and I pled guilty, stating I had hidden it in his backpack without his knowledge); and "Burglary" (for breaking into the home where the three bodies were later discovered). For each of these criminal offenses, I was sentenced to serve 25 years to life. I am eligible for parole consideration in 2102. I do not think I will be there to argue my case.

Yes, the girl I ran away with was the mother of my first son, but I did not know it until many years after, as her mother would not allow it. I never have had the pleasure of knowing the boy, now a man.

My son, Thomas Boyd, eighteen years old, was leaving a store in which he had just cashed a check, when he was accosted by three men, high on drugs, who wanted whatever he had. Ultimately, he would be shot and stabbed, his body dumped in the Sacramento River immediately outside of Redding, Ca. (If you ever search on the internet about his murder, his last name was legally changed to "Rook".)

He had never in his life been into trouble with the law, worked hard for everything he had, and in a flash his life was ended. Only one of three, "Marvin Salinas," was convicted and sent to prison where he was beaten and stabbed to death soon after his arrival at San Quentin. We all got to pay the piper.

The other two testified against Salinas, was granted "immunity," and were later released from jail.

Yes, I have written a sequel, CONSEQUENCE, about my life after CYA, when I came to prison at age eighteen and all that has happened with me since, to present day. It has yet to be published. AK Press might do it, but I cannot say for certain. If it is, I will make sure a copy is sent to Mr. Sanders.

Do me a favor, James? Give the following message to Mr. Sanders: Good "lookin' out, Mr. Sanders." James and the other kids are lucky to have you for their teacher.

I would appreciate it if you would go on to the internet and search out The Beat Within. (www.thebeatwithin.org) based at San Francisco, (415)-503-4170. "Why?" Beat Within staff I have been working with since its conception in 1996. They have groups of volunteers all over the United States who weekly go into Juvenile Halls and hold "Writer's Workshops." They also publish a weekly newsletter, about fifty plus pages, printing whatever incarcerated children write and send to them for that purpose. It gives voice to those who once had none. Its only rules are no foul language, and nothing about gang activity, no shout-outs.

Please, Mr. Sanders, at very least, go and learn about it. You will not regret taking that time to do so. Thank you, sir. I have been doing what I do now for nearly 17 years. Somehow each time I fall, I pull myself back up, dust myself off, and get back to what is really important, the incarcerated boys and girls. I shout out my utmost respects to you, and for doing the job you are doing. I know it is both satisfying, and often heart breaking. Takes a real good man to do what you do, the right way.

Again, thank you for writing to me, and asking the questions you have. I wish you all the best. Remember, "choices," okay? They will decide your future. Get that education, decide "no more" criminal lifestyle, and you will have a good life after the system has collected what it's due. Deal?

Please, tell the other kids, those who read my book, I would appreciate it if they would write to me afterward and share their thoughts and feelings, just as you have.

I am going to close with; There is nothing about me I treasure more than my word; to all of you I give it, that anything written to me that boy does not want others to know, I will never share, I know a lot of you guys have had some bad things happen to you, just like I did, and need to talk about it before it messes you up even more. I'm here when you need someone to kick it with.

Just don't write anything dealing with your case. Don't ever discuss your active legal problems with me or anyone else — other than your attorney, of course.

My regards and respect to you, Mr. James K.

I Been Through Things

I been through shootings and stabbings close ones moving on
One minute they here the second they gone
Faces on a shirt and names on a tombstone
Pour out liquor every time we drink 'cause respect is shown
I been through hell and beyond and made it out alive
Used to be a reckless now I learned how to drive
Steering my life in the right path to success
Doing it for myself screw trying to impress
I been through the rigorous training of a warrior and came out unfazed
Stayed on my toes at all times so I went with out sleep for days
Had to watch my back at all times 'cause even my shadow was suspicious
Went in a tame dog now that I'm out I'm crazy and vicious
I been through life with out a reason to keep goin'
Except the thoughts in my head and the way I keep flowin
I keep my temper tamed and never let loose
Can't slip now 'cause around my neck is the noose
I been through all the doubters and disbelievers and made them see me clearly
I'm on top of the mountain, maintaining, now can you hear me?
Can't stop me now that the motor is in motion
Got ambitions and dreams as vast and wide as an ocean
I been through the confines of the hall because I used a knife
But most of all man I just been through life

Most of you Beat readers know the powerful and thoughtful Big Vic. Well, he is back, this time he proudly writes you readers from The Beat Within headquarters in San Francisco. Yes, after 16 months confined, fighting a very serious charge, Big Vic was surprisingly released back home on probation. Yes, this was a man, who was fighting be tried as an adult and the possibility of many years incarcerated, and in the end, we are so lucky he has returned to the community to continue to teach as a writer, as well as a super strong colleague here at The Beat Within. If you have been reading The Beat for the last year, you have become very familiar with Big Vic. Vic has taken us on a many journey as a writer and poet, and now to have him in the office, leaves us speechless! We are honored and proud to have Big Vic sit alongside us here today and to add his latest piece to this special issue. Look for more of Big Vic down the road! The man has mad skills! Thanks!

I been through hell and beyond and made it out alive
Used to be a reckless now I learned how to drive
Steering my life in the right path to success
Doing it for myself screw trying to impress

My Big Day Coming Home

As I sit in the tank outside the courtroom and wait on my fate, I begin to prepare myself for the inevitable. Both my probation officer and attorney have told me I will be going to county this day, and that's if I'm lucky. I turned 18 and graduated from high school within the past 2 weeks, which under my circumstances makes me ineligible for any placement out of home, which the judge recommended my probation officer to find for me. So here I am sitting in this little room preparing to hit the yard with the big guys, or maybe even head on a bus to CYA. Either way I'm going to handle my business as usual and try to be as smart as possible. A little more time in these institutions and I'll be home, I think to myself. It has been a long, exhausting 16 months and I am actually looking forward to leaving the confines of juvenile hall. At least I'll know how much time I'm actually going to have left to do.

I hear my name being called and I begin my slow trot to the courtroom, more nervous than I have ever been. I see all the same players in this game, the D.A., my attorney, and the judge being the main ones. My parents and brothers come in shortly after, which causes me to get even more nervous. I can clearly see the tired looks on their faces from this ordeal I have put them through, and I have a sense of failure for once, that I have let down the people that mean the most to me in this world. I make many promises to myself that minute, being that once I am eventually released, I will do nothing but bring joy to the faces of my family.

The judge speaks and the session begins on his word. My attorney states all of the facts on my behalf, and does a great job. One of the staff members of the juvenile hall came to testify on my behalf also. Even though he is not allowed to do so, he felt that I deserved the best and spoke for me in court. He said many great things and I was happy he came, because he really believes in me, which makes me believe in myself even more.

After they are done the D.A. begins his speech. Every time he speaks and says a word, it feels like a knife is turning inside me. He makes me out to be a ruthless individual, with no remorse that's headed down the wrong path. I think this is it; I'm definitely going to do some hard time. I feel like this man has just ruined my entire future, and he doesn't even know me, he hasn't spoken with me once! It's incredible that he could do this, but it's his job and I've made his job so much easier by living the life I led.

The judge says he has taken every word that all of them have said into consideration. He realizes that this is a very severe case, and he has done a lot of thinking. In the end, his final decision shocks us all. He grants me a release to my parent's custody on a probationary period. I am to be release at 12:00 that day, an hour away. He tells me I must be doing something productive with my life by the time my next court day comes around which will be in December. I am speechless; no words will come out of my mouth at that moment. This is the very last thing I expected to happen. It still hasn't hit me yet.

By the time we reach my unit, I am still stunned. I begin to head towards my room to empty it of all of my possessions. I told every one that I will be leaving to county earlier that morning, because that is what my initial thoughts were. So when everyone sees me doing this, they all believe I'm leaving to county. I tell them all, which are in the class, that I'm leaving, but don't tell no one I'm going home. One of the staff members allows me to go into the office until it is my time to leave. I begin to use the phone to call all of my people to let them know I'm leaving juvenile hall. I don't plan on telling any of them that I am coming home, I want to make it a surprise. But by the time I call my closest friend, he tells me everybody already knows the news and they are all headed to my house. I am happy to know that I

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BIG VIC cont.

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have people out there that really do care.

The time comes and I scream out to everybody that I'm going home. I laugh my way out to the other holding tank and prepare for my first real breath of fresh air in over 16 months. I get my clothes from my parents and try them on, a perfect fit. I walk with the staff member that spoke for me at court to the release door. My parents are sitting behind smiling the biggest smile I have ever seen in my life. He gives me a couple words of wisdom and then releases me to my parents care. I thank him for all he has done and walk towards my parents to my old life, but with a new mentality. We embrace and it seems like all is perfect.

On our drive home they lecture me and I take it all in, not just their words but my new found freedom. Once we arrive to my house my brothers and about 10 of my friends are standing outside waiting to welcome me home. We walk in and everything seems different, although there has been little change in my house. As my dad prepares the barbeque for me, we all just sit out back and drink soda and talk. I am quiet for once, they all are used to me being the loud outgoing one, but I guess I'm still in shock. Through out the day a lot of my family members and friends come through to either say hi or stay for a while. Later that evening my close friend comes and that's when the real fun starts. He has a bottle and we start to drink a little, not too much because it's my first day back and we can't over do it. I look around and smile, because this is the first time that all of my friends have been together in the longest time. Even before my arrest we all began to do our own thing, so we rarely saw each other as a whole. But today we were all together, and it brought back memories of the good old days.

As the night winds down and everyone begins to go their own way, it hits me. I am finally home. After doing 16 months in hell, I am back on these streets as myself, but with a different mind set. I tell myself that I'm not going to be one of the guys who goes in and out of jail for the rest of their lives, that I will maintain out here in these streets. I thank God that night for everything he has done for me. And for the first time since my arrest, I have the most peaceful night sleep. No dreams, no nightmares, no screaming, just pure bliss. The next couple of days I just relax and have a little fun and party. I try to catch up on everything I missed during my incarceration. But most of all I tried to reconnect with my family and let them know how much I really appreciated them being there for me.

I am now ready to begin this journey in my life, ready to open the next chapter and begin to fill the pages. I receive employment from The Beat Within, which enables me to get in contact with some people that can help me further my education. By the resources that have been set in front of me, I am ready to attend San Francisco State University in the spring semester. I am still getting accustomed to being free, but I love my newfound freedom. I went from sitting in a tank, preparing myself to go to county jail, to sitting in this office preparing for college. Its funny how things work out in life, but the mysteries and excitements are what keeps me going everyday. I live by the day and don't anticipate tomorrow, because from my past experiences, I learned you could never know what might happen the next second.

BRYANT COOPER

Kenneth Edwards Success In Life

This next new writer, writing from Wheeler Correctional Facility in Alamo, Georgia is writing directly to someone he's taken under the wing and is trying to steer him on a righteous path. A firm believer in Jesus Christ, he often uses Christianity to relay the message of living life right and just and not letting negative temptation or those that bring it, bring him down. And no matter what he's using to get to this young brother, we hope it works because we're tired of seeing our young brothers and sisters fall victim to a life of incarceration. Whatever we believe happens to us after we die is of little relevance because one thing is universal and that's that we only have one life to live, so spending it in a cell is definitely not using it to the fullest. We envy his heart and hope his words don't fall on deaf ears. Let us know what y'all think...

To my brother in Christ, Bro Kenneth Edwards. From Bro Bryant Cooper. You are a very smart brother when you want to be. You have a lot of talent you should be putting to good use. Try to spend more time with positive people, and less time with negative people. Always put yourself first at all times. Focus your time on bettering yourself. Keep on studying for your GED test. I am proud that you stop gambling. This article is for you. I put my heart into this. Be blessed by it. God wants the very best for you. God is going to work it out for you. You just have to have faith and believe in yourself. Pray, pray, pray, please pray for your situation and your mother. God loves you so much Bro. Edwards. Always remember that you have only one life. Make the best of your life by educating yourself, disciplining yourself and learning to make better decisions that will help you grow more mature and prosper into a responsible adult. Let your mother see that you are not a child and that you have grown up and learned from your mistakes. Make your mother proud of you. You have the power to stay off those streets. Use your time that God is giving you to think about what you want in life. Love life by doing the right thing. I am your friend in Christ and don't want to see you fail in life. You failed long enough. It is time for some good things to start happening for you, but the only way that is going to happen for you is to make a change. A positive change.

Believe in yourself Bro. Edwards. Talk positive about yourself. Claim that you will get your GED, a job and that you will live righteously and stay off those streets. You are my friend and my brother in Christ. I care that you succeed out there. I care whether you live or die. I don't want to see you destroy your life. Live brother. Choose life. The streets are death. You can be so much free in life by trusting your life, your thoughts and your desires to God. I will not give up on you Bro. Edwards. God has given me a lot of patience and a good heart to help you. I thank God that I can be a blessing in your life. I will do whatever I can do to help you, but you have to help yourself. God needs you to be strong. Discipline yourself by saying no or walking away when someone that is negative approaches you with bad temptation or trying to get you to do something that will get you into trouble.

Please stay away from bad company. They don't mean you any good. They want you to be down just like they are. Even though the streets is all you know, you can learn another side of life which is the good side. I am willing to stand by your side and encourage you out there when you get release in three years. I know this will be hard, but God will help you, but only if you ask. Prison is not for you, me or anybody else. Teach yourself to be strong in everything you do. Stop worrying and stressing so much. It is not good for the heart or the mind. Being locked up put a lot of stress on our families. We cannot do this to our families again. Our family needs us. Your mother needs you. Do the right thing and be there for your mother. She is all you have. Don't let her down no more. Let this situation be a lesson to learn from. Next time, it might be worse. God bless you.

TBW THE BEAT WITHOUT

RAY SANCHEZ JR.

To Whom It May Concern:

To many of you, I'm a new name in the Beat. That's coo' wit' me I like stayin' new =). What I have to say is old though. I just happen to put new twists on the same messages. Basically, it boils down to this: No one holds you back but YOU! Not the cops, system, judges, haters, hoes or snitches. Those folks, they may slow your roll and inconvenience life, but you're the one who chooses how deeply they affect you and how you'll react. When you blame others for the shortcomings of yo' life, you become a victim. By taking responsibility for your actions, admitting to how you contributed to your situation (to yourself that is), you take power out of the next man's hands and begin to act in a positive manner, instead of reacting to another persons decisions.

Duck the police and don't post it on the block. Duck the system: don't do crime. Duck the judges: quit getting caught up because of pride, greed and envy. Duck the haters: quit flossin' — really though, why do you care how you look in the eyes of them suckas and cats destined for a prison cell or the grave? — 'cause it serves no purpose other than to ATTRACT attention. Not good if you're trying to avoid police, homie. Duck hoes: Why? 'Cause you need a WOMAN, that's why. Hoe bring headaches and paternity tests, brah — brah. Duck snitches: Don't give 'em nothing to snitch about. Refer back to how to duck the system.

Educate yourself. Get good grades. Try! Basically, do good. It's hard, homie, cause cats will clown. You'll get a lil' bummy. Shhh won't be fun or easy. But you'll make it out the ghetto and be somebody. The camaradas who see you and encourage you, those are your true homeboys and O.G.'s be an example to young homies by shinin' and never forgettin' yo' roots. Try to make someone else's life better and you'll improve your own.

Who am I to say this? Well, I ain't no punk, lame, j-cat or softie. I'm an ex-banger doing life in prison. I've been shot, stabbed and beat down. I've lost my older brother and close friends to gang violence and the dope game. I've balled out, and been a father. I'm a Bay Area native from Daly City. I've lived in 'Frisco, Oakland and Las Vegas. I've held weight, and been broke and homeless. These are my block credentials, my experiences and the influences that dictate my writings. So, know that I've dealt with issues you too have experienced. Know that even though I'm doin' life, I'm emotionally and spiritually free. Seriously, if I can thrive in a cell, how much more so can you?

This next Beat Without veteran always makes his cameo a strong one in our pages. In fact, he quickly became one of our most favorite writers and hasn't given up the title yet. He has not only been through a lot but he also challenges the rest of us like no other. He challenges us to think about our actions and to not make ourselves out to be the victim. For though we all have our own obstacles, Ray rightfully let's us know, that in the end it is our own choices and decisions that make us who we are. And in turn, bring about whatever fate we've placed ahead of ourselves, whether it's a degree from college or a number from prison. This week he hits us with four amazing poems and a letter to those who haven't decided they need a change yet. And the common theme throughout all of his writing is compassion. His heart is big, though that can get lost by some of us through his in your face way of confronting us about our many glitches. The weaker of us may get defensive when reading this, but the stronger of us can understand it for what it's worth and that's a man who's made it his destiny to enlighten the rest of us, so we can stay clear of the devastating path he's trod upon. He's writing from Pelican Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. We are always in awe of what he has to say, so it's our pleasure to publish him as always. Thanks Ray...

Self Defeated

Hungry fo' somethin' better
Refusin' to swallow pride
Say you thirst fo' knowledge but ignorance is paradise
Ain't got a pot to piss in and still blamin' it on the system
Saying you ain't got no choice
Sound like an effin' victim
I make ish happen
Cause actions that you actors react to
I'm mo' happier in a cell than you on them city streets, foo'
Mo' money, mo' problems
Act like you ain't know
Big ballin' brings big burdens
Act like you got dough
I've held G's, 223's, rims clean,
Done peeled hella witches
Seen things beyond dreams
Mo' snow than a Canadian Christmas
I've hit it while you missed it, and still ain't be satisfied
The material was false and hollow
Couldn't fill up the hole inside
Heard hella excuses fo' losin' all self control
"It's the cops"
"It's 'cause I'm Black"
"My mom's on rock"
"My Pops,
He wasn't home"
You ain't the only one in this world
Who the world done did him wrong
Is that how you gon' spend yo' time?
Whining 'til you dead and gone?
Complainin' is fo' suckas, defeat, that's fo' the weak
Now listen to yo' self, still claimin' you sucka free
Sound like a sucka to me who done fell fo' the rope-a-dope
Kept fightin' against the law 'til you tired and finally broke
It ain't nuthin' new
Same play, same roles
The only thang that's changed is the names and the style of clothes.

Breathing Meth

Breathe in
Screamin'
A heart full of sin contaminatin'
Breath out
My doubts
Cloud my better jvudgment
Turn all the lights out
I fell for the lies
Surprised by the truth
Chasing my own tail
Was kept out the loop
Kept the illusion alive
With all my breathin'
Kept the fog vivid
As I comply with the schemin'
My demons, gone in a puff
Cracked back and like rust
The remnants of my soul
Corrode into dust
My life's in the commode
As the commode starts to flush
Breathe in the rush
Breathe out and just
Hushhhhh

Breathe in
Anticipation
In between breaths
I'm losin' patience
Angrily aggravated
Anxiously awaitin'
For reality to relocate
It's safe to say I'm shakin'
Breathe out
But no relaxation
My nightmares vaporize
More drugs for the patient
Meditate on medication
In phases I change faces
My breath kills in stages
A recipe for death
A bow full of Meth
My life gone in smoke
As I breathe what is left

Many Nights (Dark Thoughts)

Many Nights
I've dreamt about cut veins
My damaged brain, my soul is always in pain
Many nights I'm suffering miserably
Many nights it's just the same activities
Many nights
I've waken in a cold sweat
Feeling death every time I try to take a breath
Feeling stressed
Feeling like I've left behind
My will to live
Somewhere in my dreaming mind
And still I rise
Apprehension in my eyes
Fear the sun
Blood red in the sky
It promised pain
And somewhere a child cries
I see the lies
Whispered in my neighbor's mind
I'm feeling 'noid
God's own abandoned boy
These false joys seem to be the devil's ploy
Disrespect
Caught a piece up in my neck
It's a riot
And I'm bleeding what blood is left
I'm goin' down, drownin' on my own juice
I cannot breathe
I feel my soul is wrenching loose
I leave my body
Bleeding on the concrete
Then I wake
Cold sweating from the memory

Many Nights
Feeling that it's hopeless
I'm jokeless, no laughter in the soulless
I hold this
Knife and I focus
The coldest of many nights
This is my opus
My greatest work
My goodbye to the Earth
We came from
And must return unto the dirt
Smoking' PURP
Smuggled from visiting
I'm yelling in the wind
No one else is listening
I feel my sins
Raging in my mind within
I feel the dark
Spark within an evil grin
I feel despair
Climax in the air
I want attention
But it seem as though no one cares
I want an end
To the pain that plagues all men
Anti-psychotic drugs
They ain't helpin' to fight my cravin's
Insanity
Needing me to cut and bleed
I pray to God above
Please forgive me for my evil deeds
And when I die
Flying from this world of hate
Grant peace to my victims
And please forgive me my mistakes

"Many nights, desperation has held me, and guilt has ground my will. This is probably one of the worst feelings man or woman can experience as despair is the absence of hope. How can one live without the hope for a better life? If you have no faith, then nothing matters. Not your friends, family, or you. Anger and hate, these are awful, but are more often than not a cover, a way to mask our despair. I know because as I wrote this, I felt it. I let it consume me in county as I fought my case, and all I did was confirm what the D.A. thought of me. All I did was give in to their expectations, smashin' for a "cause" that didn't care about me. And now, I'm stuck in a concrete cell, and will be for many nights more."

An Honorable Man

I've seen hella shhh during the time that I've lived
Sins and Gin, inducin' courage again
Friends lost to an A-K's cough
My ends fluctuate from weight to nothing at all
A boss at times, and a soldier when not
And I went from having a girl to just wishing she'd rot
Seen my homeboy's nose
Pushed through the back of his skull
At point blank range, then I watched him fold
Convulsin' on the street
While I anticipated the heat
That somehow jammed as it was aimed at me
And the time it didn't jam
And slammed me across the lot
At Mickey D's by the Cow Palace, didn't know I was shot
Shocked and completely lost
Blood loss had me confused
Now I'm hearing young rappers try and fit in my shoes
Afta street cred, smashin' heads to get ahead
And stay quite unphased when one of them get dead
That shhh pisses me off
'Cause I know we's so much more than graveyard lots
R.I.P. tattoos and a name on a wall
A shout out in a rap song
Our own homies swearin' they miss us
Then turn around to slap salami down on yo' misses
It's vicious this game
Your fame chasing's a shame
Gangs and 'caine slanged just to get you a name
Paintin' a bull's eye on the back of yo' ass
Job security for cops who see you as cash
Smashed like a bug yet claim you a thug
You think what you do is cool
Let me show you some love

I wish I had my friend's back
And my big brother, too
I wish I never knew
What it's like to catch what I shoot
I wish I wasn't slammed down fo' the rest of my life
Couldn't attend Pop's funeral
Can't make love to my wife
I wish I was a square
Yeah, you read me correct
I'd kill fo' the opportunity to come home
To work and earn me a check
Acceptin' respect from those who hold no regret
From hiring me to do a job
Thankin' God that my lifestyle's legit
No mo' lookin' over my shoulder
Fo' enemies, fiends or rollas
My meals no longer depend on the sale of my bouldas
Do you really think I'd care how I stand
In the eyes of a man doomed to do time in a can
Dead or hooked through the gills
By narcotical grams?
So here's the message, the end of my scams
I wish I could regress back to an honorable man

SHAWN MONTGOMERY

When The Feds Come Knocking

When I go to mail call to receive my newspaper. I turn directly to crime news to see who's most likely to become a inmate. It's not that I get off on seeing someone's life destroyed. I'm more-or-less amazed to see that people are still doing the same stupid stuff. It's almost as if they believe that what they're doing is legal, or that the consequences of their actions aren't sever. I guess I can't talk too much considering my own predicament. I was just as ignorant to the truth as they apparently are.

What most people don't know, and what a majority of federal inmates didn't know, is that the feds can pick up just about any case they choose. That means that if you commit a crime, and there is a federal element involved, let's say a gun or a certain quantity of narcotics, a federal prosecutor can stake claim to your case and prosecute you in a U.S. District Court. If that happens, forget everything you thought you knew about the law, and prepare yourself for the worse ride of your life. When you do find yourself staring down the barrel of the federal indictment, here are a few things you need to know about the "matrix" you've been thrown into:

1.You're Going Up The Road. This is not the state. If they serve you papers, you're going to do some time. You only get probation after you've completed your sentence. They gave Martha Stewart 6 months. What do you think they'll do to you?

2. Paid Attorneys Are A Waste Of Money. The feds win 98.5% of their cases at trial. There are only a handful of lawyers in any city that are qualified to litigate in federal court. The honest ones will tell you that the best they can do is broker a plea you can live with.

3. The Guidelines Kill You. The feds sentence people strictly by the book. Jesus could walk into a courtroom and speak on our behalf and it wouldn't matter. If the guidelines say you score out to 20 years, that's exactly what the judge is going to give you.

4. Parole Is A Myth. The feds haven't had a parole since the early 1980s. Every year the rumor spreads around December that it's coming back. It hasn't come to pass thus far. Prepare to do 85-87% of your time.

5. Don't Believe The Hype. There are no pools, tennis courts; lobster tails or any of that other crap people tell you about. Unless you go to a military base camp, there is nothing sweet about the Feds. The conditions continue to deteriorate, and with the new war on terrorism and immigration reforms, it will only get worse.

6. Dry Conspiracies Are Real. They don't need to catch you with narcotics. If two or more people say you sold it to them, they can and will indict you. Depending on your criminal history, you could be looking at anywhere between 10 years to life in prison.

7. A Gun Is Your Worse Enemy. If you're a convicted felon and you are anywhere in the vicinity of a firearm, you're hit. Even a bullet by itself can get you 5-20 years und the 922g statute.

8. The Block Is Hot. Because of all the factors mentioned above, people are doing and everything to keep from going or to get out of prison. Like Jay-Z said, "In this era, snitching is the shhh!" that homicide or robbery you thought you got away with in the 90s wll come back to haunt you.

9. These People Aren't Playing. Federal judges are dropping NBA type numbers on sentences. If you're not ready to spend the next 20, 30, 40, or 50 years in prison, stop whatever you're doing. This game is not based on sympathy. If you're not built to play it, don't get on the field.

We come across few who are as wise and talented a writer as this next one. And this week he hits us with several amazing pieces and poems, each worth reading. The first is about abolishing the use of the N-word because although it's a word that carries a whole lot of hate, many people still use it 'til this day. Shawn's argument is that the use of the word, especially from Black people to Black people is disrespectful to those who lived and died trying to take the hate out of that word. People like Harriet Tubman and Malcolm X dedicate their whole lives to the furtherance of their people only to see the generations after theirs use this word as if slavery never happened. He then goes on to give us his definition of what a "good family" is. And from his perspective, a good family doesn't necessarily mean a family that's well off in finances. There are other virtues that come along with building a good family. And most of them have to do with how the parents treat their kids. He challenges everything from what it means to be a winner and a loser to how drugs are the root of all evil breaking the longstanding root of all evil — money. He prepares us if we're ever getting chased down by the Feds and he also makes the very true statement that nobody out here cares about people in prison. That's why prisoners feel like they're swept under the rug. And in the end of his, "Winners And Losers" piece he gives us something to think about as we're used to viewing things literally, but he makes us aware of how wonderful the mind is. An outstanding treat to have in our back section. We hope it won't be the last from such a great man, writing from Florida State Prison in Raiford, Florida.

Solitary Confinement

As I sit here in this lonely cell,
My mind races back to nothing but a life of hell.
In solitary confinement, all you can do is think.
And so far I have 8 years of thoughts.
To all my fellow convicts and inmates in solitary confinement,
Use your time wisely and don't let the system break you.
Pray for the negative officers because they need help, too.
8 years of pain;
Knowledge, wisdom, and understanding I had to gain.
God made what was so wrong so right.
Now I'm out of the dark and in the light.
Love to all my brothers in solitary confinement.

Laws Of Success

1. See Your Vision And Stick With It
2. Always Do You
3. Get Your Mind Right
4. Stop Frontin' And Start Today
5. Never Less Than Your Best
6. Surround Yourself With The Right People
7. There Are No failures, Only Quitters
8. Science of Success: Plant the Good Seeds
9. You Can Never get Before You Give
10. Successful People Stay Open To Change
11. Be powerful, Be Heard
12. Spit Truth To Power

In The Depths Of Solitude

I exist in the depths of solitude pondering my true goal.
Trying to find peace of mind and still preserve my soul
CONSTANTLY yearning to be accepted and from all
receive respect Never compromising but sometimes
risky and that is my only regret.
A young heart with an old soul how can there be peace
How can I be in the depths of solitude where there are
to inside of me. This Duo within causes the perfect
opportunity
To learn and live twice as fast as those who accept
simplicity.

Our rise as a people first begins with our thinking. How can you change a people if you can't first change the way they think?

Drugs Are The Root Of All Evil

We are often quoted the statistics on how much crime exists in our streets, how unsafe our neighborhoods are and how many of our young Black men are in jail. They are there for all kind of reasons. I have done no research, but it is my considered opinion that all of this is drug related.

There are thousands of Black men who are in jail simply because they got caught with drugs in their possession. Still others are there because they robbed, beat up somebody and even murdered someone, and the cause was drug related.

Drugs are so addictive that people hooked will do anything to anybody to get drugs, or money to buy drugs. When people do these things, they often add to both crime rate, and the prison population.

It has been said through the years that money is the root of all evil. Today, we have to modify that, and say that the love of money is second to drugs as the root of all evil.

Drugs have seriously and adversely effected the fabric of our society. They are so plentiful, that they can be bought on almost any corner at almost anytime of the day. Drug houses are sprinkled throughout most communities.

Years ago, the United States came to realization that drugs were a serious and evil problem, and launched a war on drugs. It is a war that the U.S. has been losing from day one. It is time that U.S. revised it's strategies on the war on drugs.

That new strategy may call for the legalization of certain drugs such as Cocaine and Marijuana. Not only are drugs the root of most evils, they are also very expensive for taxpayers.

It has been estimated that it costs taxpayers between $27,000 and $32,000 a year to house an inmate. If so many people weren't in jail for drug possession, think how much money would be save.

While the U.S. is thinking, it needs to keep in mind that drugs are driving up the crime rate, dehumanizing our young people, destroying families and is affecting the quality of life in this country.

The N-Word

Ninja. Negro. My Ninja. These are the words we so proudly answer to. What's worst is these are the names we also call one another by. You see, Black people everywhere are walking around saying things like, "Whats up my ninja?" and "Where you been Negro?" Why don't we mind being ninjas and Negroes? Don't we realize that this is just as worst as being a slave on a plantation? To balance things out, its what our slave-masters also used to call us. So, we've ignorantly brought this word into the 21st century, like its okay to be a ninja or a Negro, but it's not. The definition of the word "ninja" is – slang: extremely disparaging and offensive a person of any race or origin regarded as contemptible inferior, ignorant, etc."

Why should we abolish the "N-word"? When we say the N-word, its like we're saying we miss slavery, being on a plantation and being called Negroes. Well, I'm not okay with any of this. How about you? I'm sure most of you will say the N-word throughout the day. To me, what people are saying when they say the "N-word" is that they don't care about all the people that gave up their lives so that we can no longer be just Negroes, but so we can be viewed as equal people in America.

Calling black people by the "N-word" shows that we are not grateful for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, Malcolm X, Sojourner Truth, and all of their hard work and sacrifice in making sure that we are considered more than slaves, but judged by the content of our character. We should be grateful to these people because they fought so that we could be treated fairly in all circumstances.

I was reading a magazine about Alicia Keys doing her first movie. The director asked her to say the N-word and she proudly stood, and said, "No!" A lot of you all think that's dumb; it's just a movie. However, Alicia Keys respects herself and her people — she showed that by not speaking to her fellow actor/actress in a foul term, especially one as foul as the "N-word" that made me appreciate Ms. Keys and the rest of my Black Brothers and Sisters more. It was at this time that I promised never again to use the "N-word."

I think we should abolish the "N-word;" If we don't, then we will never know what it is like to think good thoughts about ourselves and become mentally free overnight. I mean, we can say we are free all day long, but we'll never be truly free, unless we stand up for ourselves and all of our Brothers and Sisters. We have to stop calling our people the N-word and other names out of their birth names. The N-word is a word that has been known to hurt many people. The way I see it, we've been hurt enough by ourselves and others. Why not start somewhere and begin the healing progress by calling our people what we really are... beautiful kings and queens of the motherland?

I hope I have touched someone's heart and made you realize that the N-word should never again be used by anyone anywhere, especially Black people. Our rise as a people first begins with our thinking. How can you change a people if you can't first change the way they think?

Not only are drugs the root of most evils, they are also very expensive for tax payers.

Winners And Losers

I remember reading about Thomas Edison, how the great inventor, prior to making the light bulb that worked, had failed close to a two thousand times. When asked about it, he replied that he hadn't failed, but only discovered two thousand ways in which a light bulb wouldn't work. Someone says that winning isn't everything, but the only thing. Yet how do we define that "only thing" if it is as simple as being the opposite as losing? A defeat for one is a step towards victory for another. Again, who is in a position to determine winners and losers? Does success define a winner or failure a loser? Certainly, we all have criterion by which we measure these matters, but it's clean that there's more to it then our perception of things.

In general terms, winning means gaining something and a winner is seen as victorious, captivating. A loser, on the other hand, is usually marked by failures and defeats. Interestingly enough, in my Webster's New Explorer Dictionary and Thesaurus, a "convict" is a synonym for a loser. The definition is given by a society where money is God, power is a idol, and honor is given to those who ascent the ladder of success by stepping on those beneath them. The dictionary doesn't explain if a convict is still a "loser" if he was wrongly convicted on if he was convicted for saying the right thing (as was the case with many "losers" who later were magically turned into "winners" by the rise of history and a change of opinion).

At the same token, is one still a "winner" if the success comes at the price of one's dignity or is attained by shameful means? Life is a journey, and only when it is complete and the final destination is reached the title be determined. A winner today can easily become a loser tomorrow and it is not about whom we are, but who we are seeking to become. Each day, we choose our own path, and true achievement isn't what we possess, but what we have overcome to attain it. Its important to be on the right track — even if it means being on the losing side. "Many persons have a wrong idea about what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose. Its not about finishing first, but making it to the finish line in spite of the obstacles and personal stumbling. Without struggle there is no progress," said Fredrick Douglass.

The greatest struggle is the one we face within ourselves and against ourselves. The greatest victory is over oneself for the sake of others. A winner isn't someone who doesn't know a failure, but who overcomes his failures. And a loser isn't the one who fails while trying, but who fails to try at all. I believe that we all lose when we fail to use what we have, or take for granted whatever opportunities we are given. I believe that we win when refusing to compromise in principle, when we take a stand in something good — even if it means suffering a loss in privilege or benefits. I've been a lose on many occasions, often many times a day, but that's not who I want to be. Every day each of us inches closer and closer to becoming a winner or a loser at the end of our journey. Ultimately, the difference isn't measured by success or failure, but I'm refusing to accept failure as the final outcome.

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Prison... Who Cares?

"Shawn, you need to forget about all that crazy shhh you be writing about and just write about parole." This is what I hear about every other day from fellow inmates.

To them, the only thing a convict with a pen should be focused on is parole and prison reform. Everything else is irrelevant. As far as they're concerned, anything that happens on the other side of the wall, might as well be taking place in outer space.

I try to explain to them that people in the "real world" don't care about what goes on in prison. They don't understand that the average person doesn't want to hear about first-time offenders receiving life sentences. They think people like you are really concerned about 19 and 20-year olds having their entire lives thrown away behind petty drug charges.

You don't have to explain it to me. I know you're busy going to parties, raising children, paying bills and having cookouts, but try telling them that. They insist that if the word got out about the harshness of State and Federal Sentencing Guidelines, and how parole could help thousands of inmates trapped in the system, that you would actually try to assist in the struggle. They're crazy, right?

I don't know how many times I've told them that it doesn't matter that Joe Inmate has earned a Masters of Business Administration since he's been down. His 30-year sentence is what most people on the outside think he deserves, even if it was for a non-violent offence. These inmates, they just don't get it. For some reason, they fail to realize that people don't care about someone else's brother, father, son, or sister being locked away, as long as it's not their brother, father, son or sister.

The men in here truly believe that if I mention parole bill HR 3072, which is currently under consideration in Congress, that you guys in the free world actually support it by contacting your local U.S. representatives. I know better though. I fully comprehend the concept of "out of sight, out of mind." Things unseen eventually cease to exist. That's why prisons are considered first cousins to cemeteries. A prison compound is really nothing more than a graveyard surrounding by a barbed wire fence. The units are mausoleums, the cells are crypts and the bunks are caskets. You drop a flower off at one, and money order at the other.

You see, I understand all of this, but the guys in here, they don't. For whatever reason, they refuse to believe that they're "dead" to you. They have faith that things could change if you would only listen. I'll never understand where they get such optimism. You would think that as slick as the average convict is, he could take a hint. I mean, you don't write, you don't send money, you don't visit, and you even punch the number when they call to keep from calling back. What more can you possibly do to let them know that you just don't care.

Now We Get To Understand

Suddenly, it all makes sense. I don't know why I didn't realize it before. The only way to settle a dispute is to get a gun and kill the person you are having problems with. What could I have been thinking? I mean, its obvious I'm not man enough to settle my dispute by either winning a fistfight or losing one. That would make me look like a chump, and I would lose the respect of my fellow thugs.

This is a different time. We're not like the men were back in the days. Back then, a man was sure of who he was, so losing a fight wasn't a big deal. As long as both of them walked away, everything was fine. But, those days are long gone.

This is a new tribe of young men who refuse to allow themselves to be portrayed as anything but tough and willing to kill to prove it. We have no fear of going to prison or dying. We have no fear of not living to see our 40th birthday. None of that matters. All that matters is we do what we want to do while we're here, and not allow anyone to disrespect us. Now sometimes, that may come off as us wanted you to be afraid of us, but the end result is the same.

We don't take crap from anyone, and if you do something that makes us angry, you go to go. We all have guns, and pulling the trigger is no problem. That's how you gain stature in the hood and it makes everyone afraid of you. No one would dare snitch you out, because they know what would happen if they did.

Its time people out there recognize us and understand we aren't going anywhere. A new generation of us comes along every year, and more meaner and nastier than the one before.

So notice has been served. We are here, and you have to deal with us. I know you don't want us dealing with you. By the way, stop bringing up our parents, because they were brought and paid for a long time ago. It's amazing what a little drug money will do.

The Girl In The Glass

When you get what you want in your struggle for self.
And the world makes you Queen for a day.
Just go to the mirror and look at yourself,
And see what THAT girl has to say.
For it isn't your mother or boyfriend or me
Who judgment upon you must pass;
The person whose verdict counts most in your life.
Is the one staring back from the glass.
Some people may think you a good person and call you a Queen.
But what do the girl in the mirror has to say
If you can't look her straight in the eyes.
She's the person to please, never mind all the rest.
For she's with you clear up to the end
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test.
If the girl in the glass is your friend
You may fool the whole world fool the pathways of years.
And get pats on the back as you pass.
But your final reward will be heartaches and tears
If you've cheated the girl in the glass.
Be proud of who you are and never give up dreaming.
Pursue those things in life that will make you a better person for life, not for the moment. Get high on yourself.

What Is A Good Family

So many young people are getting into trouble today and people are shocked. These youngsters are robbing, stealing, using drugs, selling drugs, killing people and doing a hoot of other things. People are so shocked about these actions, because these accused young people come from 'good families.'

Which brings me to the question as to what people consider a 'good family?' Does having good jobs, being educated, loyal to church members, respected members of the community, and a community activist make a family a good family? Sure, they are all traits of a good family, but they don't necessarily make a good family.

Families give their young ones money, cars, fine clothes, jewelry, nice homes and almost anything else money can buy. In my opinion, these things alone do not make good families. Children need much more than this.

I know of families that have little money, modest homes and just barely clothe and feed their children. They supplement their material gifts with love, discipline, support and moral principles.

These things tend to guide the conduct of most children, ever when they are out from under the watchful eyes of their parents or guardians. These parents re-emphasize these family values by spending time with their children. They know their children's friend, where their children go, what they watch, what they read and what they listen to. They even play a vital role in helping their offspring to select their friends.

Is this exercising too much control over their children? Absolutely not. Parents have to be involved in every aspect of their children's lives. It is their absolute responsibility. Many families that are conceived as being good families are not so.

Their social life, community involvement, jobs and religious activities make them too busy to have the time needed to effectively raise and guide their young ones.

While parents are out doing their thing, their children are out doing their thing. Many times their children's things eventually lead to trouble and embarrassment. In most cases, parents had no idea of what their children were involved in and find it hard to believe.

Parents should give their children what they need most... Discipline, boundaries, moral values and stress education. All these equal to tough love today, and no tears tomorrow.